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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7374th meeting
Friday, 30 January 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Barros Melet/Mr. Llanos/Mr. Olguín Cigarroa	(Chile)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

Letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/32)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

Letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/32)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Egypt, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Ms. Ilwad Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I propose that the Council invite the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/32, which contains a letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kang.

Ms. Kang: On behalf of Ms. Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, I have the honour to deliver the following statement.

It has been more than 15 years since the Security Council broke new ground by recognizing the protection of civilians as central to its mandate. Since then, the Council has taken important steps to implement its commitments to protect civilians. The Council has increasingly identified protection of civilians as a priority task in many of the peacekeeping operations it has created. The Secretary-General has launched the Human Rights Up Front initiative to reinvigorate system-wide coherence and commitment to preventing and responding to serious human rights violations that could lead to mass atrocities. Humanitarian actors have also strengthened their policies and programmes to protect civilians in crises, as exemplified in the 2013 Inter-Agency Standing Committee statement on the centrality of protection.

Despite these positive developments across the United Nations system, the task of protecting civilians in armed conflict has become more and more onerous over the years as the scale and level of brutality and violence committed against civilians in armed conflict have continued to rise. From Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan, the Sudan, Ukraine and many others, civilians caught up in armed conflict are being killed and maimed, fleeing their homes and fearing for their lives. Now more than ever, the protection of civilians needs to be at the top of our priorities.

The need for protection has increased dramatically in recent years, mainly as a result of armed conflict. At the start of 2014, humanitarian organizations appealed for aid to help 52 million people in urgent need of assistance and protection. By the end of the year, the number had gone up by almost 50 per cent to 76 million. The overwhelming majority of these people

are civilians affected by conflict, and the majority are women and girls.

The number of people displaced by conflict has reached levels not seen since the Second World War. At the end of 2013, there were more than 33 million people living in internal displacement caused by conflict and violence. The majority have been displaced for several years or even decades. The average length of displacement is now 17 years. Of course, one of the worst examples of this is in Syria, where more than half of the population is currently displaced — 7.6 million internally, some repeatedly, and 3.8 million as refugees in neighbouring countries. But the number is growing elsewhere, too — for example in Darfur, where 450,000 people were displaced last year, adding to the more than 2 million already in internally displaced persons camps.

Another area of serious concern is the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Figures from 2013 show that when explosive weapons were used in populated areas, 93 per cent of the casualties were civilians. The Secretary-General's call to avoid the use of some explosive weapons in populated areas has obviously remained unheeded.

The Security Council has taken concrete action in a number of cases to implement its commitments to protecting civilians in armed conflict, and it has recognized the particular protection needs of women and girls. In 2010, the Council adopted resolution 1960 (2010), which requested the Secretary-General to set up monitoring and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence, and called upon parties to conflict to make clear commitments to combatting sexual violence. Resolution 2122 (2013) put in place stronger measures to enable women to participate in conflict resolution and recovery. In addition, the Council has adopted sanctions expressly targeting perpetrators of sexual violence in various conflicts around the world.

But the scourge of sexual violence in armed conflict is far from being rooted out. Indeed, in most conflicts, women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by sexual violence, and the brutalization of women remains a consistent and persistent feature of conflict. For example, as it has captured territory in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has used and punished women to demonstrate its power. Women have been repeatedly raped, forced into marriage and sold into slavery. Nigerian women and girls have given harrowing accounts of their experiences at the hands of Boko Haram. In Afghanistan, the number of women and girls killed or injured — including through targeted attacks against women in public roles and against girls seeking education — has continued to increase at an alarming rate.

Women and children must also face the increased vulnerability brought about by displacement, family separation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and restrictions on humanitarian aid. Women and children make up some 80 per cent of refugees around the world and the majority of internally displaced persons. Women and girls who are displaced are particularly at risk of being targeted for all forms of gender-based violence. Harmful practices, such as forced and early marriage, as well as survival sex, are also more common during displacement.

Simply put, crisis exacerbates gender inequalities. While entire communities suffer the impact of armed conflict, women and girls are often the first to lose their rights to education, to political participation and to livelihoods, among other rights being bluntly violated. These are manifestations of deeper, systemic problems. We need to better understand the social, economic and power dynamics that result in the continued enslavement of and use of violence against women, particularly in conflict situations. We must also make concerted efforts to expand women's representation and participation in rule-of-law processes and protection mechanisms. Women must be included in the political leadership, security forces and accountability mechanisms of countries.

To facilitate these efforts on the ground, 17 women protection advisers have been deployed to six peacekeeping operations and embedded in the offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-Generals. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan regularly consults displaced women in the protection of civilians sites through consultation groups that have been formed. These consultations help to ensure that prevention and protection strategies led by the Mission take into account the perceptions and security needs of women. Such good practices are being replicated in other mission and non-mission settings.

The primary responsibility for protecting and assisting civilians affected by armed conflict lies with the parties to the conflict. Yet many parties have demonstrated complete disregard for their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights

law. In some cases, parties to conflict deliberately target civilians and use tactics designed to cause them the greatest possible harm. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has massacred hundreds of civilians and destroyed thousands of homes, schools and medical clinics during the past few weeks. This follows repeated incidents of kidnapping of hundreds of women and children. In Syria and Iraq, all parties have been targeting civilians based on ethnic and religious grounds.

Parties to conflict are also denying people access to basic assistance such as food and medicines. For example, in Syria, the routine removal of medical supplies and equipment from humanitarian convoys has prevented critical medical aid from reaching those who desperately need it. Violence, insecurity and movement restrictions have further hindered access to medical care, including reproductive health care for women and girls. It is estimated that nearly 1,500 women give birth in dire conditions each day in Syria, and that access to obstetric and neonatal care is virtually non-existent in some ISIL-controlled areas in Iraq, such as Anbar province. Even siege is being used as a tactic of warfare in Syria, where some 212,000 people are in areas that are totally blocked off. They cannot get out and we cannot get the required aid in.

International law is clear: parties to conflict are responsible for meeting the basic needs of persons under their control. Consent for relief operations must never be withheld on arbitrary grounds. If parties are unable or unwilling to provide adequate assistance, they should allow and facilitate rapid, safe and unimpeded access to people in need, including the immediate free passage of medical supplies. Yet, time and again, we see parties to conflict violating those basic obligations with impunity, with grave consequences for civilians.

Parties to conflict must be pressed to do more to comply with their legal obligations and ensure accountability whenever such obligations are violated. But the responsibility does not lie solely with the parties themselves. The Security Council and the international community must take steps to tackle the impunity that continues to fuel many conflicts, as well as the endless flow of weapons and arms. There is nothing that emboldens violators more than knowing that they will not be brought to account for the crimes they have committed.

We also need to build up our collective capacity to find political solutions to conflicts at an early stage, rather than struggling to cope with the consequences. The efforts of humanitarian workers and peacekeepers are no substitute for timely and resolute political action to prevent and resolve conflict. And women must be full participants in the process. On the ground, we need to be more attuned to the specific threats that civilians are facing and the risk of escalation of violence and violations, often manifested through heightened discrimination and repression of minorities, including women and girls. When we see early warning signs, we must be able to act quickly and effectively. That is at the core of the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Kang for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Durham.

Ms. Durham: On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), let me first thank you, Mr. President, for inviting the ICRC to address the Security Council during this crucial and timely debate on a subject that is at the heart of our humanitarian mission. The protection of civilians in armed conflict has been a regular item on the Council's agenda for many years — proof that it remains a matter of concern for the international community.

Yet I regret to say that, based on our observations in the field, that I cannot report any significant progress in the way armed conflicts are being waged, or any significant alleviation of their impact on civilians throughout the world. As in the past, civilians are too often directly targeted by warring parties. Tens of millions more suffer the indirect effects of armed conflict. That is most vividly illustrated by the fact that the number of refugees and internally displaced persons is higher than it has ever been.

The single most important measure to improve this situation is to make sure that State and non-State parties to armed conflict comply with their legal obligations under international humanitarian law and other applicable norms. This is imperative, whatever parallel efforts are under way, to find political solutions to a conflict. In that regard, the Security Council has a significant role to play to ensure that those directly responsible for protecting civilians meet their responsibilities in full. Every State party to the Geneva Conventions also has an obligation in that connection: Article 1 common to the four Geneva Conventions calls on States parties to respect and ensure respect for the Conventions in all circumstances.

The Council having chosen today to address the challenges and needs facing women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings, I would like to highlight the situation of women during armed conflict, with a specific focus on the subject of sexual violence. All that follows is based on the ICRC's field experience and activities.

As a group, women are not inherently vulnerable in armed conflict. They may be victims or perpetrators, fighters or bystanders; or they may be actors of influence. Armed conflict changes the circumstances of all the people it touches. Women are made vulnerable mainly by the conditions that are imposed on them, not by their sex. At this point, it is critical to remind ourselves that fighters are also afforded protection by international humanitarian law, particularly after they are hors de combat. That includes protection against sexual violence. All victims of armed conflict must be treated humanely, without adverse distinction.

During armed conflicts, displaced women and girls, as well as female heads of households, are particularly vulnerable and at risk of certain kinds of violence, including sexual violence. Because their husbands are missing, detained or taking part in the fighting, displaced women and female heads of households often have to shoulder the burden of being a single parent in extremely difficult circumstances. That means providing — by themselves — the family's income, deciding — by themselves — about their children's education, and guaranteeing — by themselves — the safety of their families.

While also affecting men and boys during armed conflict, the impact of sexual violence on women and girls is disproportionally greater. The consequences of such violence — for victims, their families and entire communities — are extremely serious. Sexual violence causes physical trauma and long-lasting mental health problems, and can be financially ruinous. It can lead to social stigmatization and be the cause of reprisals. And sometimes it kills. Those are only a few consequences of sexual violence that victims have to deal with every day.

Sexual violence remains comparatively invisible, and statistically underestimated. Because of cultural constraints and the strong feelings of shame and fear that are often engendered by sexual violence, most victims do not dare come forward to seek help. Of course, that only adds to the devastating effects on them, their families and communities. Constraints and obstacles notwithstanding, immediate and appropriate action must be taken, on the basis of systematic and thorough assessments, to respond to the multifaceted needs of victims of sexual violence.

Sexual violence is a medical emergency. Victims of sexual violence need to be assisted and given immediate, unimpeded and free access to health services, including medical and psychological support, ideally within 72 hours of the assault. They should be treated with humanity and dignity at all times. Their privacy must be respected and the strictest confidentiality maintained while responding to their needs.

Victims need to be protected against all forms of ostracization or re-victimization and from any further abuse — by making their environment safer and by providing guidance on risk awareness and risk reduction. Those are essential components for the response. Victims who are willing to seek justice must also be able to report their allegations safely, without fear of reprisals or social stigmatization or of becoming entangled in a lengthy legal process. Victims should have access to economic support, as well as to administrative and other legal remedies. For those who have been detained, detention should not be an additional barrier for them to access remedies. Such remedies are extremely important: they enable victims to survive and rebuild their lives.

Victims also need to see perpetrators brought before courts of justice that respect fair-trial guarantees. In armed conflicts, international and non-international alike, rape and other forms of sexual violence are serious violations of international humanitarian law and entail individual criminal responsibility. All States have the obligation to criminalize these violations in their domestic legislation. Governments must ensure accountability for rape and other forms of sexual violence by investigating such acts and by prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators.

In 2013, the ICRC undertook a four-year commitment to intensify its response to the issue of sexual violence. It has been striving to do that ever since. In Colombia, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Lebanon and various other countries, we are aiming to improve its delivery of impartial, holistic and effective humanitarian responses to victims of sexual violence, while also strengthening activities aimed at preventing such violence.

We believe that the ICRC and other humanitarian actors have an important role to play in preventing sexual violence and in providing a holistic response to its victims. But we are also aware that our efforts will be for naught if States do not bear their primary responsibility in addressing the needs of victims and providing suitable remedies for them and their families, with full respect for their own obligations under international humanitarian law.

Domestic laws, regulations, policies, reparation schemes and processes of restorative justice should respond to the many different needs of victims and must fully comply with international law. Strengthening and building institutional capacities within the judiciary, the police, the military and among all detaining authorities, including those dealing with displaced persons, should be a priority. It is equally important to bolster the ability of victims to heal and rebuild their lives.

Sexual violence during armed conflict is a violation of international humanitarian law. It is not inevitable. It must and can be stopped. What is required is a concerted effort by everyone concerned to prevent and put an end to it. The ICRC will continue to encourage States to pursue action based on their pledges at the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to enhance protection for women during armed conflict. It also stands ready to support States, ahead of the thirty-second International Conference, which will take place at the end of this year, in their efforts to draft measures specifically for combating sexual violence and responding to its consequences.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Durham for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the Ms. Elman.

Ms. Elman: Just days ago, in Mogadishu, the mother of a 14-year-old girl called me. Her daughter was raped two years ago by a Ugandan soldier in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The soldier returned to Uganda, where he remains in detention awaiting trial. The mother often calls me, not seeking an update on the case, but to help her daughter. Her daughter has now been labelled the "girl who was raped by the infidel" and ostracized by her community.

The nature of my work, providing emergency, life-saving services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, is to respond to such calls and provide any support I can. I am here today, with a heavy heart; as a representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security; as one of the Directors of the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia, an organization founded by my late father, who was killed advocating for human rights; and in my capacity as the Youth Ambassador for Somalia on Youth to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I returned from the comforts and safety of Canada to Somalia five years ago because I believe that we all have a role to play in the peaceful transition out of conflict. I have seen first-hand the catastrophic consequences of violence against civilians and of protection strategies that are gender-blind and have failed to meaningfully include women. In many contexts, as in the case of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, women continuously report feeling unsafe. Food-distribution sites are set up in areas not easily accessible. Women and girls must collect food, firewood and water for their families, often risking rape and abduction when doing so. Latrines continue to be built without locks and without regard for the need for sex-segregated facilities to ensure safety and privacy. Sanitary napkins and other basic hygiene supplies are still deemed luxuries and not necessities.

There is a need for more responsive channels for women to communicate with humanitarian officers and peacekeepers about their immediate protection concerns. This communication is often dramatically enhanced when women themselves are serving in roles such as peacekeepers and police.

In 2014, however, we witnessed the deliberate exclusion of women from these processes in Somalia, when more than 700 women were dismissed simultaneously from their posts within the Somali National Security Forces. In addition, women-led civil society groups who are able to speak to the underlying drivers of violence and the protection rights and needs of women, are often undermined, harassed and threatened. I speak from personal experience, and I have lost too many friends, colleagues and family members.

In order to advance women's inclusion in addressing these challenges, I urge the Security Council to mandate inclusive, gendered decision-making in the design, implementation and monitoring of protection-of-civilian strategies, including those responding to acts of gender-based violence. This means consulting women from the beginning, including those displaced and with disabilities.

The Council must take the necessary steps to increase the number of female staff in peacekeeping operations, including in their military and police components alike; ensure that all missions with protection-of-civilian mandates have adequate logistical support and resources, including the full deployment of human rights officers, gender experts and women protection advisors; and address the protection needs of all of us humanitarian workers and women human-rights defenders, who are increasingly being targeted, abducted or disappeared.

The Security Council must also simultaneously and urgently act to prevent the blatant misuse of power and the sexual exploitation and abuse we are witnessing in Somalia and in other countries. I speak on behalf of the 14 year-old girl, her mother and the thousands of other survivors in urging the Security Council to reinforce the United Nations zero tolerance policy and prevent those deployed to protect communities from themselves becoming the violent perpetrators, too often with impunity.

Mechanisms for reporting human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, must be gender-sensitive, confidential and non-discriminatory, as the fear of stigma, discrimination and possible retribution often deters survivors from coming forward and seeking judicial or other forms of assistance. This requires engagement with affected women in a safe and respectful manner as well ongoing consultation.

To protect women from these human rights abuses and to ensure accountability, I urge the Security Council as a matter of priority to insist on accountability for atrocities committed by all armed groups and security forces, including addressing sexual and gender-based violence and civilian casualties; reinforce efforts to ensure justice systems are re-established, with investigations and prosecutions conducted in accordance to international standards; ensure that troops are adequately vetted, prepared and trained, and that they engage in confidence-building measures with the local populations, including those displaced; hold troop-contributing countries accountable for these crimes and call for the investigation and monitoring of human rights abuses by AMISOM and by peacekeeping personnel across other missions to be included in all public reporting on the human rights situations in any given country; mandate that sex-disaggregated data be included in peacekeeping mission reporting; and see to it that United Nations protection focal points provide clear, accessible and confidential complaint mechanisms to survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Protecting civilians is also about ensuring that people can live without fear. In Somalia, as in places such as Syria, Gaza, Nigeria and Ukraine, we have witnessed civilians in populated areas being targeted, injured and killed by explosive weapons. The impact of explosive weapons in populated areas must be addressed, and international cooperation is needed to set stronger standards to protect civilians. The experience of the African Union Mission in Somalia has shown that policies to limit the use of mortars or other indirect-fire explosive weapons can help save civilian lives.

The implementation of international humanitarian law in a gender-responsive manner is key to enhancing the protection of civilians. Women must have equal access to accountability mechanisms, reparations and non-discriminatory medical care, including safe abortion and post-abortion care for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Women must also be granted equal nationality rights.

Women in Somalia remain largely underrepresented as political leaders, candidates, civil servants and elected officials. Ahead of next year's elections, it is imperative that the United Nations supports a process that leverages the political inclusion and participation of women, strengthens Somalia's security sector and promotes respect for human rights. During the past year's State formation process in western Somalia, not a single woman was elected at any level of the new Administration, despite the overwhelming numbers of female candidates. I am confident that transformative and fundamental change with relation to women's leadership and participation can happen in Somalia.

This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which calls for women's inclusion in all efforts to mitigate and respond to conflict. Women's meaningful participation, whether in high-level political positions or in peace processes, must be a core component of all peace and security efforts, including those aimed at addressing protection, implementation and protection challenges for women and girls. I call on the Security Council to make the full and systematic implementation of the women and peace and security agenda a central priority in all areas of its work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Elman for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank the Chilean delegation for holding this important debate today. And I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang, International Committee of the Red Cross Director Durham and Ms. Elman for their sobering and challenging briefings this morning. This is the first protection-of-civilians debate in which a representative from a non-governmental organization has briefed the Council, and I welcome that initiative. It is vital that we listen to people on the ground, and I hope that this example will be repeated in future.

The protection of civilians is at the heart of everything we strive to achieve in the Security Council. It is our raison d'être and what the United Nations system is ultimately judged on. Protecting the lives of women, men, boys and girls from the ravages of conflict is vital to our mission. Today, we consider the unique and devastating impact that conflict has on women and girls and the challenges that we must overcome to empower them as equals in our society. Daily we are reminded of the vast array of human rights violations that women suffer in conflict, and of extremist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram, which attack women's rights — their bodies, their education, their choice of religion — as a central tactic of their terror campaigns.

It is estimated that 1,500 Yazidi and Christian people were forced into sexual slavery in Iraq last year. In Nigeria, hundreds of women and girls were kidnapped from Chibok. In South Sudan and the Central African Republic, high levels of child forced marriage and rape persist unabated. It is clear that much more can be done, and it is vital that we do it. We must address the underlying causes of gender inequality and violence against women, not only in conflicts but also in peacetime.

I think there are four key areas for the Security Council to consider.

First, we must consider women's participation and equality. Queen Boudicea is a symbol of powerful female leadership in Britain. A tribal warrior, over the past 2,000 years she has inspired many great women who have fought for gender equality. But even in my country there is still a way to go, and we cannot be complacent. The United Kingdom is thirty-fifth on the United Nations Development Programme Gender Inequality Index. We continually strive to achieve equality and to end violence against women in our society. Our gender pay gap is the lowest on record. We have allocated almost $60 million to specialist support services and national helplines for domestic violence. By 2016, women in our military will be serving in combat positions alongside men for the first time.

Unsurprisingly, countries in conflict face particular challenges on this agenda, with underlying inequality being compounded by a breakdown in society. To quote a few examples, the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes one hundred and forty-seventh in the Inequality Index. Mali is one hundred and forty-eighth, Afghanistan one hundred and forty-ninth. One woman is raped every minute in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Afghanistan, women face the daily threat of assassination purely for choosing a role in public life. These are challenges that we have to address. The fact that women are not present at every peace table is as much a rebuke to men as an insult to women. That so many post-conflict Governments do not include women in their security and judicial infrastructure is as damaging to those bodies' success as it is to women's rights. That we struggle to have an appropriate number of women on a high-level panel considering the future of peace operations shows that, even here at the United Nations Headquarters, our own words do not yet match reality. This must change if we are truly committed to enhancing women's protection and to bringing about a more peaceful society.

Secondly, supporting survivors of gender-based violence should be incorporated into humanitarian programming and into the first stage of an emergency response. Provisions should be put in place for vulnerable populations, such as the young, the disabled, the elderly and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities. Through the call to action in 2013, the United Kingdom announced $30 million in new funding to help protect women and girls in emergencies. That includes $5 million for the United Nations Population Fund to establish safe spaces for women in Syria, and $6 million and $2.5 million in Lebanon and Jordan, respectively, to prevent vulnerable families from turning to child labour and survival sex.

Thirdly, the protection of civilians by peacekeepers must address the needs of women and girls as well as men and boys. The report of the Global Summit to End

Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London in June 2014, will be circulated shortly, with recommendations including those on peacekeeping. Addressing sexual violence in conflict should be a mission-wide objective. Indicators of success for protection-of-civilian mandates should include the consultation of women, particularly displaced populations, and how the concerns identified are being addressed. Scenario-based training on sexual violence should be incorporated into every predeployment training for contributing countries, including at the senior-officer level. And existing reporting and accountability mechanisms for sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeeping personnel must be much tighter. We look forward to examining recommendations from the high-level discussions on Monday on this topic. It is critical that the peace operations review reflects these issues and the broader obligations of Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Political Affairs on women and peace and security and women's participation.

Finally, engaging with military and security actors remains a key challenge. The security sector should be responsive to women's needs, and gender-sensitive training should be part of any police, army and justice sector reform. Concrete measures must be taken to increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of women throughout national militaries and police forces. Greater information-sharing among military and civilians is crucial to better inform our strategies to protect women.

The year 2015 is a significant one for women in conflict environments. As we move towards the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we look forward to the publication, in October, of the global study and the high-level review on women and peace and security. We hope for ambitious, tangible outcomes and commitments that can really change the lives of women and girls across the globe. Words are no longer enough. Now our actions must speak louder.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Chilean presidency for its proposal to once again take up the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We are grateful to the briefers for their assessments and their very useful information.

The situation in the area of the protection of civilians in armed conflict continues to leave room to be desired. Women and girls, as well as other categories of civilians, continue to be victims of various forms of violence. The Council has repeatedly called upon parties to conflict to fully comply with the provisions of international humanitarian law with respect to the protection of civilians. Nevertheless, we continue to receive alarming reports from victims in Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Libya and other areas of armed conflict. Despite the statements of the parties to armed conflict concerning measures they have undertaken, there is no end to the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, leading to the death of thousands of people, a great many of whom are women and children, who are customarily considered to be the most vulnerable parts of the populace.

In addressing protection of civilians, we cannot overlook their situation in Ukraine. We are deeply concerned by the dramatic deterioration of the situation in the south-eastern part of that country and the resumption of shelling of residential neighbourhoods in cities of the region. We firmly condemn such actions against civilians and call for careful, objective inquiry into the tragedies that have occurred. Since early January, the armed forces of Ukraine have been firing almost continuously on the major city of Donetsk in Donbas. Today, there have been further tragic reports of people killed by artillery fire on the city. There has also been rocket and artillery fire against Luhansk and other cities of the region.

The number of victims in the conflict has already exceeded 5,000 people and continues to grow. As in other regions of the conflict in Ukraine, it is women and children who suffer the most. Behind the dry numbers and statistics of the victims among civilians lie their ruined lives. The growth of these numbers must be immediately ended. Clearly, this cannot be achieved militarily but only via an inclusive, direct political dialogue.

The Ukrainian authorities not only continue to carry out a de facto blockade of the south-eastern part of the country, but are essentially ratcheting it up. Social entitlements are not being paid, and impediments are being created to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, medicine and food. The destruction of infrastructure, hospitals, and water and electricity sites continues. Restrictions are being tightened on the movement of people, even in those cases where there is a need for urgent medical assistance. Last week, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees expressed concern over recent decisions of

the Ukrainian authorities in that regard, noting that they undermine the possibility for humanitarian agents to help those in need. Doctors Without Borders and other non-governmental organizations are sounding the alarm, warning of the onset of humanitarian disaster.

In all armed conflicts, the belligerents bear primary responsibility for full compliance with the standards of international law and for taking all possible measures to ensure protection of civilians. International institutions and mechanisms are meant above all to assist national efforts. The primary reference points here must continue to be the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic principles of United Nations peacekeeping: consent of the host, neutrality and the use of force only in accordance with the mandate. The efforts of the international community must be comprehensive and, above all, aimed at eradicating the root causes of violence through a settlement of the conflict and the restoration of law and order.

Peacekeepers plays an important role in protecting women in armed conflict. Their mandates increasingly include the functions relevant to that end. Clearly, gender issues must continue to be taken into account when forming peacekeeping contingents. This must be done not generically but by taking into account the particularities of each specific situation. A similar approach should be applied with respect to instructions to United Nations system entities to take into account gender issues in their activities. It is important to recall that each one has its own authorities, while ensuring the protection of women is one component within the framework of activities to prevent and settle armed conflict and in post-conflict situations. It is necessary to avoid redundancies of efforts in this area with bodies in the United Nations system that have the relevant remit, such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women and others.

Protecting the interests of women and children in armed conflict has been a constant focus of the Security Council in recent years. Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent documents on the issue of women and peace and security are aimed, inter alia, at enhancing the capacities for the participation of women in varying aspects of settlement of armed conflict and in post-conflict recovery. Resolution 1612 (2005) is also crucial. It lays out the basis for the protection of women in armed conflict. Actions to protect civilians, including women and children, must be based on a clear Security Council mandate and on full compliance with it.

We support the activities of the Security Council and the entire United Nations system aimed at fully taking into account the needs of women and children in policies and efforts in the area of peacekeeping and recovery, including in education, health care and the broadening of economic rights and opportunities. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of women and children refugees and internally displaced persons and persons with disabilities, not to mention the situation of elderly women. In general, women and girls, for varying reasons, are more vulnerable in armed conflict. It is therefore particularly important to protect them within the overall activities to protect all categories of civilians.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate, which is all the more timely given the approaching fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). I also thank the three briefers who have informed us so eloquently this morning: the Assistant Secretary-General, the observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Elman. I particularly join the United Kingdom in welcoming a briefing from a non-governmental organization.

The protection of civilians has become an increasingly important feature of effective peacekeeping mandates, and an equally important feature of the successful execution of those mandates. However, that same effectiveness and success have also exposed some significant shortcomings, some of which have already been related, and New Zealand believes that the Council must frankly address those shortcomings.

Indeed, we must have, I think, first a very frank conversation about our understanding and expectations with respect to the protection of civilians. Having done that, then we can bring in troop-contributing countries, police-contributing countries, hosts, donors, the Secretariat and other stakeholders — all part of a very open and free conversation. What we have got to do is to probe beneath what might appear to be a successful surface, and ask about the impediments to the implementation of protection mandates, which will then enable us to explore constructive solutions.

Today's debate is rightly focused on the protection challenges and needs of women and girls. But while women and girls must be protected, they cannot be

viewed solely as in need of protection. Women and girls are also important agents for achieving the protection of civilians. It is widely acknowledged that women have an important role to play as leaders and decision-makers in the prevention and resolution of conflict, but while that is recognized, it is not consistently applied in practice. For example, women should also be visible in roles within post-conflict accountability and transitional justice structures — something that, as well as making a significant post-conflict contribution, also helps to encourage women and girls, particularly victims of sexual violence, to report offences and to follow through on that complaint.

But there are others whose vulnerability is often even less acknowledged. Persons with disabilities and older persons often suffer most in conflict situations, and yet older women and women and girls with disabilities are given very little consideration in terms of their protection needs; nor is there sufficient recognition of their ability to contribute to protection efforts, to contribute to conflict settlement, and to contribute to peacebuilding.

Armed conflict can both lead to disability and can disproportionately affect persons with existing disabilities. Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable in conflict. They face compounded challenges because of physical, communication and attitudinal barriers. Sudden attacks pose particular problems and challenges. The deaf cannot always hear when attackers approach. The blind may not know the way to safety. Those with intellectual or social disabilities may not understand what is happening. All of them are especially vulnerable. In many conflict situations, older persons and persons with disabilities are often the first to be forgotten or neglected. Too often, they are quite simply left behind. They also face difficulties escaping conflict. With the disintegration of families and communities, they can become isolated, destitute and without support systems. They are at greater risk of exploitation and sexual violence. That is especially true of women and girls, as was so eloquently related to us by Ms. Elman. When conflict ends, their experience and potential for peacebuilding and social reconstruction — the role they can play — can often be overlooked and, quite simply, dismissed.

As the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross pointed out to us, recognition of the special respect and protection due to the elderly and persons with disabilities is found in the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions, relating to the evacuation and treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obliges States to take measures to protect people. States must honour those obligations. When implementing mandates, particular attention must be given to the protection challenges and the needs of older persons with disabilities. Measures that might better protect these groups should be considered, including improved monitoring data collection and reporting on the impact of conflict on these groups, including improved civilian harm and casualty support. Secondly, peacekeeper training should focus on the specific needs and challenges of persons with disabilities and on older persons. Thirdly, we should specifically address the situation of persons with disabilities and older persons in protection-of-civilian strategies and humanitarian responses. Finally, we should address the inclusion in peacebuilding efforts of older persons and persons with disabilities. We need their knowledge, and we need their experience. It is only with such measures that an often neglected and highly vulnerable group can be protected from conflict.

If we address the protection challenges and needs of women and girls and if we protect older persons and those with disabilities, we will have gone a long way to more effective protection-of-civilian mandates overall. Moreover, we can use the frank conversation I called for at the beginning of this statement to achieve that objective.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the initiative of Chile in holding today's public debate. I would like to thank Assitant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang for her briefing. China also listened attentively to the briefings made by the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

At present, the traditional security threats faced by the international community intertwine and interact with non-traditional security threats. Regional conflicts, violence and terrorist attacks flare up frequently. Trans-national organized crime has become more problematic. Many women and girls suffer the most and have become the most vulnerable groups to attacks and harm. The international community should attach great importance to strengthening the protection of their rights and interests and work together to

strengthen synergy and coordination in this area. I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, we must address the root causes while also addressing the symptoms. It is essential to promote peace and development, which are fundamental to the protection of women and girls and their rights and interests. The international community should take practical and effective measures to promote the political process of achieving national reconciliation in order to create a favourable environment that prevents women and girls from suffering the scourge of wars. At the same time, the parties concerned should join efforts to comprehensively promote national economic and social development and gender equality and the empowerment of women, effectively paving the way for the protection of women and girls and their rights and interests.

Secondly, it is essential to respect the principle of national leadership of the countries concerned and their capacity-building. The countries concerned bear the primary responsibility for protecting women and girls in conflicts. The international community must respect the leading role of the countries concerned and coordinate with them in their efforts to protect women and children and ensure their rights and interests. In accordance with the needs of the countries concerned, the international community should provide constructive assistance and play a greater constructive role in promoting the efforts of the countries concerned to protect women's rights and security. Most important, it is essential to address the real difficulties faced by the countries concerned in terms of financial, technical and human resources, and comprehensively strengthen their capacity-building in the relevant areas.

Thirdly, it is essential to facilitate women's full participation in decision-making and their full development. In certain countries and conflict regions, women have an important role to play in peace and development, and their role should be brought into full play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Moreover, they should play an active role in good offices, mediation and negotiation. In seeking solutions to conflict, it is important to fully consider the special needs of women. At the same time, it is necessary to provide women with the means that allow them to fully participate in political, economic and social development, and to enjoy equal rights regarding education, health and employment in order to ensure their full development.

Fourthly, coordination, cooperation and synergy in protecting the rights and interests of women and girls is a cross-cutting issue. The relevant agencies of the United Nations. The relevant agencies should strengthen their coordination and form synergies. As the main body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should effectively fulfil its responsibilities in the context of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, UN-Women and UNICEF should leverage their comparative advantages and closely cooperate with the Council to generat synergy. At the same time, regional and subregional organizations should increase their cooperation with the United Nations in order to promote the rights and interests of women and girls.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the Fourth World Conference on Women of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. That provides important opportunities for the international community to protect women and girls' security and their rights and interests, and fully realize gender equality and women's empowerment. We hope that the United Nations will build on past important experiences, pay greater attention to empowering women, seek more effective ways to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of women and girls and address the full implementaion of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. China is prepared to work together with the international community to achieve those goals.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. I would also like to thank the three briefers for their outstanding presentations. I join the other delegations in commending the participation of civil society in this meeting.

When I read the excellent concept note (S/2015/32, annex) prepared by the Chilean presidency, I remembered the tragic images of 16- and 17-year-old Yazidi girls who had been raped, abducted and abandoned. One of them who survived that tragedy decided to take her own life. Indeed, the situation could not be more disturbing. At the same time as these girls were being born in the late 1990s and the negotiations on the Rome Statute were coming to an end, the Council was, for

the first time, adopting resolutions that specifically addressed the protection of civilians and peacekeeping resolutions that contained very specific mandates on the protection of civilians. Since then, important steps have been taken. Unfortunately, however, current conflicts highlight the fact that violence in general, and gender-based violence in particular, are increasing day by day and that we are lagging behind those events.

The protection of civilians will be the focus of Spain's contribution to the review of peacekeeping operations being led by Mr. Ramos-Horta. However, to ensure that the protection of civilians is truly effective, not only must we assess peacekeeping operations, but another four crucial aspects, as mentioned by Ms. Kang, should be addressed. I share her opinion of the great importance of humanitarian law, humanitarian access, accountability and the role of non-State actors.

Resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the tremendous impact of conflict on women. Women face a wide variety of threats, and for that reason we must seek equally varied measures. As some speakers have noted, we will encounter a series of crucial events this year. First is the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth Beijing Conference on Women. At the end of the year, we will agree on the post-2015 development agenda. We must review peacekeeping, resolution 1325 (2000) and the Peacebuilding Commission. Spain, which will preside over the Security Council in October, will devote all of its efforts to ensuring a successful review of resolution 1325 (2000). To the extent possible, given the fact that all these important events are occurring at the same time, we will try to achieve new gender architecture on behalf of the United Nations.

The Security Council has focused its attention on women, and in particular on sexual violence in conflict. But I think it is also important, as noted by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, that this organ become involved in other important aspects, such as accountability in relation to the role of women in peace talks, mediation processes, ceasefire agreements and post-conflict situations in general, because women's empowerment is absolutely crucial if we desire greater success.

I wish to point out the eloquence of our briefer from civil society, Ms. Elman, who provided some truly disturbing figures on the poor or non-existent participation of Somali women in the administration of Somalia. Training can play a critical role in that regard. Without proper training, we cannot successfully address that situation, which, as I have said, deeply concerns Spain. We will do our best to contribute to a solution, or at least to an improvement of the tragic situation. There is a major imbalance between our legal framework and the situation on the ground. We must do everything possible to eliminate that vacuum.

I conclude simply by recalling the terrible statistics we have heard today, indicating that each minute a woman is raped in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Clearly we are not doing our job very well.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I commend you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, with a focus on the specific needs of women and girls. Let me also thank Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for her important briefing, and Ms. Helen Durham and Ms. Ilwad Elman for their statements.

Civilians, particularly women and children, in countries in conflict or post-conflict situations, suffer unspeakable atrocities. Statistics published by United Nations agencies on Syria, Iraq, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan, among others, are highly informative. Given such atrocities, the international community must forge a consensus on the need to find urgent and appropriate solutions. That consensus is reflected in resolution 1325 (2000), which is the foundation of the architecture for the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. On that basis, the Secretary-General and various partners have established a series of technical and institutional arrangements.

The aide-memoire of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, endorsed by the Security Council, is a practical guide that could contribute effectively to improving the protection of civilians. It contains important measures that could be implemented in conflict situations. In particular, it stresses the responsibility of the parties to protect women and their accountability for violations of law, taking into account the specific needs of women and their involvement in the prevention and settlement of conflict. In that vein, resolution 2122 (2013) complements and strengthens those initiatives by categorizing various violations and abuse targeting women in conflict and post-conflict situations. It also addresses forced displacement and provides important technical elements to identify violence against such persons.

For its part, the Security Council has demonstrated a clear desire to end the violence against women and civilians, particularly through its recent debates and decisions. In 2014, the Council made a point of recalling, in presidential statement S/PRST/2014/3, the important role played by peacekeeping operations in the protection of civilians, and reaffirming their need of a protection mandate to implement. Furthermore, it called for improved coordination between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to that end.

The Security Council also underscored in its presidential statement S/PRST/2014/21, of 28 October 2014, the important role of the United Nations in conflict prevention and the protection of women and girl refugees and internally displaced persons, particularly with regard to sexual and gender-based violence. It underscored that the fight against impunity can be strengthened through the work of the international tribunals, and encouraged Member States to involve women's organizations in the crafting of strategies to counter violent extremism and to strengthen women's role.

For their part, regional and subregional organizations are working to protect civilians in conflict areas, as has been the case in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic. A code of conduct for missions on the ground is being finalized by the African Union, with the establishment of a zero-tolerance policy.

Despite all of these initiatives, the situation of civilians in countries in conflict or post-conflict has unfortunately not improved. Violence against women and girls continues to increase and is therefore in urgent need of solutions, particularly in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Somalia. In South Sudan, for instance, some sources indicate that sexual violence in displaced persons camps and local communities is pervasive and persistent. Such practices are used as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where women and girls have been publicly raped in the presence of their fathers, brothers or husbands. Violence against women and girls has recently increased, owing in particular to the resurgence of many armed and terrorist groups, which have targeted them directly in a number of cases, such as the girls abducted by Boko Haram in Nigeria under unacceptable conditions.

The various reasons for this continuing violence against women in conflict or post-conflict situations are mostly well known. They include, for example, ignorance, fear of retaliation for denunciation, cultural values and practices and discrimination. We also believe that impunity, an absence of coordinated action in implementing Council decisions, both at the institutional level and in peacekeeping operations, and a lack of technical and financial resources constitute real reasons. Furthermore, the States that bear the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens show no genuine willingness to take steps to do that. In that regard, it is vital that sanctions regimes be strengthened and applied and, for instance, that countries harbouring armed and terrorist groups be blacklisted, similar to the list of countries where children are recruited into armed conflict. The implementation of all such actions by the international community and peacekeeping operations designed to protect civilians must be carried out without infringing on States' sovereignty and, of course, in the interests of the women and children concerned.

In conclusion, we believe that we should stop thinking about the issue in terms of the decisions to be made and start thinking about how to implement those decisions effectively. In that regard, the Council should work to efficiently integrate a specific gender perspective into every mandate renewal and resolution, ensure women's full, effective participation in efforts aimed at settling and preventing conflicts, investigate and follow up attacks that target women, integrate a gender perspective into all efforts against violent extremism and terrorism and, lastly, ensure that peacekeeping operations shoulder their responsibility to protect civilians. The involvement of regional and subregional organizations, as well as communities and opinion makers, could certainly help to produce convincing results in the protection of civilians, particularly women and girls.

Finally, we hope that the events scheduled for this year such as the review of resolution 1325 (2000), the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the establishment of the post-2015 development agenda will provide opportunities for achieving the effective implementation of the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this

debate on the eve of a number of deadlines for crucial upcoming efforts such as the strategic reviews of peace operations, the women and peace and security agenda and the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of the agencies of the United Nations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the non-governmental organizations working in difficult conditions, whose experience in the field, as we just heard in the briefings, is clearly essential.

The numbers of all the countries and all the violent acts committed in them against civilians, including thousands of women and girls, are unfortunately too many to list. Those facts are not just statistics, they are a reality that we must work to change through better protection of civilians. How can that be done? There are four types of action that can be taken, particularly in areas where peacekeeping operations are deployed. The first is by protecting the people living within conflict zones. That sounds obvious, but too often the Blue Helmets' attitude lacks the dynamism and mobility needed to ensure a successful mission. We expect the review of peace operations to take that reality into account. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has a robust mandate for the protection of civilians that it is fulfilling in difficult conditions. It is vital to ensure that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic reaches its full operational capability by April, as planned, and that it adopts a robust posture in implementing its mandate.

Secondly, we must guarantee that protection within peace operations themselves. Unfortunately, 10 years after the publication of Prince Zeid's report on sexual abuse and exploitation in peacekeeping operations (A/59/710), crimes continue to be committed by those charged with protecting civilians, including, by the way, in regional operations such as the African Union Mission in Somalia, which has been denounced by Human Rights Watch. In order to prevent such abuses, we must act on two levels — first, by strictly enforcing zero tolerance and filtering policies designed to prevent troops, soldiers and officers who commit such acts from participating in peacekeeping operations, and secondly, by punishing and prosecuting those responsible. The United Nations cannot afford to be impugned for its actions; its missions and operations must serve as examples.

Thirdly, I would like to emphasize the importance of preventive and complementary actions for the protection of civilians. To begin with, the participation of women makes operations on the ground more effective to the degree that they are involved in devising strategies for protecting civilians. For example, they can help to design camps and protection sites so as to better meet their needs in terms of secure access to services and basic infrastructure. Women's participation in peace operations is also a way for peacekeepers to have a closer relationship to local communities and thus win their trust, which is clearly essential to protection. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, works closely with local stakeholders to support victims of sexual violence and recruitment by armed groups, and such practices should be followed throughout the Organization.

Then there is prevention. It is vital that within human-rights sections, teams of human rights, gender and protection counsellors should be effective and well coordinated, in order to enable them to assess whatever threats are present through accurate analysis of the data on women and children's human rights and then to sound the alarm and avoid any deterioration of the situation. Regarding sexual violence, training is essential and must be carried out to benefit both those involved in peacekeeping operations and the local populations, in order to reduce the social stigma for the victims.

Fourthly and finally, there can be no protection without justice. The confirmation on 1 December 2014 of the International Criminal Court's indictment of the warlord Thomas Lubanga for war crimes and, more recently, the transfer to the Court in January of Dominic Ongwen, a commander in the Lord's Resistance Army, are important steps in combating impunity for violence against civilians, most of them women and girls. But most acts of violence, particularly sexual violence, go unpunished, often because women refuse to complain for fear of repercussions. That is why we must also ensure that victims are protected when they bring legal action against the perpetrators of such crimes. We must break the chain of silence through protection.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, for presiding over this important meeting. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang, Ms. Durham of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Ms. Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

for their informative and moving briefings and tireless work on this important subject.

Shortly after the Secretary-General released his report (S/2014/693) on women and peace and security last year, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria released a document of its own — a pamphlet of rules about how jihadists should handle trafficked women and girls, including those sold into sexual slavery. In recent weeks, the Al-Qaida affiliate the Al-Nusra Front released a video that appears to depict a woman, arms seemingly bound behind her back, kneeling, while a man declares that she has been convicted of adultery by an Islamic court. The video then shows this woman being summarily shot in the head by a man who himself is clad in body armour.

Last year, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) released its own video that appears to depict a young woman being stoned to death in the presence of her father. In the final moments of the video, she is seen begging her father for forgiveness. She is then led to a hole dug in the earth surrounded by men who throw stones at her. The young woman, in what would be some of her final words, offers this advice to women: "Protect your honour more than your lives."

The unique horror confronted by women and girls in conflict is as chilling as it is urgent. While conflict does not discriminate on the basis of gender, it does disproportionately affect those who are marginalized, vulnerable or oppressed. In too many societies around the world, for too long, women and girls have been marginalized, vulnerable or oppressed. If we care about addressing the problems encountered by women and girls in wartime, we must be prepared to address the enduring problems of discrimination and inequality of women in peacetime.

As the Secretary-General documented in his 2014 report on women and peace and security, the threats facing women and children in conflict are worsening, not improving, in many parts of the world. We can and we must work together to turn this tide.

Defenders of women's human rights are increasingly targeted. Efforts to silence people like Razan Zeitouneh in Syria and Salwa Bugaighis in Libya are efforts to silence hope, curtail progress, impede justice and infringe upon the dignity of women, not just in Syria and in Libya, but around the world.

We know that refugees and displaced persons are mostly women and children. And we know that they suffer disproportionately from sexual and gender-based violence. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the continued presence of armed groups amid an increasing number of displaced persons and refugees has led to shocking cruelty and rampant sexual violence. In one of the most devastating incidents, at least 387 people — including 300 women and 55 girls — were raped by armed groups in 13 villages in eastern Congo between 30 July and 2 August 2010, that is 387 rape victims in three days.

In the face of this kind of destabilizing cruelty and grotesque violence, the Council has mandated peacekeeping missions in places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the very difficult and very important work of protecting civilians. Indeed, 98 per cent of United Nations troops now serve in missions with mandates to protect civilians.

Yet, again and again, there is a gap between what we say must happen and what actually does. We have seen peacekeeping missions fail to implement their mandates to protect civilians, thereby creating a substantial gap between principle and practice, between mandates and implementation. A report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services found that in 507 attacks against civilians, from 2010 to 2013, United Nations peacekeepers virtually never used force to protect civilians under attack. Thousands of civilians, countless women and children among them, may have lost their lives as a result.

United Nations peacekeeping missions must do better when they are given a mandate to protect civilians in desperate need of protection. That means, at a minimum, that we must work to improve early-warning systems, especially for sexual violence, to help peacekeepers identify potential threats and take preventative action. Continued shortfalls in staffing critical peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic have left civilians, particularly women and girls, vulnerable.

When peacekeepers themselves become a part of the problem of sexual and gender-based violence, rather than a solution to it, it is our fundamental responsibility — indeed, it is a moral imperative — that we collectively ensure they are held accountable in a transparent and swift manner.

The Security Council also must do more. It is easy enough for us to agree in an open debate in the Chamber that protecting women and girls in conflict is important.

I mean, can anyone really disagree? But when called upon to act, too often we are too slow or too silent. When reports emerge of an alleged mass rape in Darfur and active obstruction by the host Government of the peacekeeping mission's ability to investigate becomes clear, the Council has an obligation to act. And yet, too often we do not. This must change, as our credibility depends on it, victims need it and justice demands it.

We are making modest progress and there have been some developments in our collective efforts. Of nine United Nations peacekeeping operations cited in the last Secretary-General report on this topic, nearly 70 per cent of their military strategic concepts of operations include specific measures to protect the human rights of women and girls. More and more missions are providing more robust gender and conflict analysis in their reporting, but much remains to be done to link analysis and reporting to actionable recommendations, and actionable recommendations to actual action.

Largely due to the work of organizations like those present here today, considerations on the risks confronted by women and girls are now being integrated into peace agreements. In 2013, more than half of all peace agreements signed included references to women and peace and security. The number of ceasefire agreements that include sexual violence as a prohibited act has tripled, as compared to only three agreements with such provisions having been signed prior to 2012.

Here, too, at the United Nations, there is work to be done. Women should not only be participating in peacekeeping operations, they should be leading them. While three women lead peace operations as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General — one as Force Commander and one as Acting Head — women head only 19 per cent of all United Nations field missions. While we welcome the deployment of three all-female United Nations police units in Liberia, Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we recognize that 97 per cent of military troops and 90 per cent of police personnel in United Nations missions are men. If we are serious about expanding opportunity for women everywhere, we must expand opportunity for women right here.

Expanding opportunity and empowering women in peacetime is essential to tackling the unique problems women confront in wartime. After all, the best protection from sexual violence in conflict that targets women and girls is building societies where women and girls are respected and have equal access to justice, educational opportunities and health-care services — societies where women enjoy equal protection under the law and equal access to political space. The best protection, to borrow the final words of the woman slaughtered in ISIL's gruesome video, is the difficult and imperative work of building societies that value women's lives and minds and potential as much as their honour.

Mr. Sarki (Nigeria): First of all, let me thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate and for the excellent concept note (S/2015/32, annex) that you, Sir, circulated. We have listened carefully to our briefers: Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Ms. Helen Durham and Ms. Ilwad Elman. I thank them for sharing their insights on the important topic that is the subject of this debate.

Situations of conflict affect civilians in a disproportionate manner. For reasons linked to their gender and other social factors, they affect women and girls even more. In these situations, women and girls face sexual violence, sexual enslavement, trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The relatively high occurrence of female-headed households, where women are forced to take on non-traditional roles, is another dimension of the problem faced by women in conflict situations.

Therefore, while protecting civilians in conflict situations poses a great challenge, protecting women and girls is an even greater challenge. For this reason, it is vital that the protection of women and girls in conflict situations receive special attention, and we thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to organize today's debate.

The Security Council, through its women and peace and security agenda, has shown a firm commitment to the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1960 (2010) and 2122 (2013) are a clear demonstration of this commitment. With these frameworks in place, the Security Council now has the tools to promote greater protection for women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

We cannot fail to notice the nexus between the ready availability and proliferation of small arms and light weapons and conflict, which must be effectively addressed by the Security Council. The ratification and faithful implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty must be a step in that direction.

Regional organizations have an important role to play in preventing and responding to conflict-related violence. In this regard, we acknowledge the efforts of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in appointing a Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security, whose mandate includes the protection of women and children in conflict situations and facilitating the participation of women in peace processes. The African Union (AU) also has cooperation framework with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The framework aims to develop a joint strategy to eradicate conflict-related sexual violence through various measures, including the enhancement of the capacity of peacekeepers deployed in Africa to prevent and respond to sexual violence. We would like to see this cooperation between the United Nations and the AU further strengthened.

Nigeria is pleased with the AU declaration of 2015 as the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development. While much has been achieved in Africa in terms of promoting gender-equality and women's empowerment, considerable challenges remain. It is our hope that the AU declaration will encourage AU member States, civil society, international partners and other stakeholders to work together to promote the cause of women and girls.

Nigeria would like to acknowledge the vital role of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in drawing attention to the gender dimensions of armed conflict and in promoting women's participation in peacemaking. The involvement of NGOs, especially those run by women, in policy advocacy, seminars, workshops, training programmes and other activities undertaken on behalf of women, has gone a long way in raising the profile of the women and peace and security agenda. We commend in particular the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for its leadership role in promoting the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and for its close engagement with the United Nations on matters pertaining to women and peace and security.

While we acknowledge that States bear the primary responsibility for the protection of their citizens, the reality is that most conflicts occur in an atmosphere of lawlessness where the activities of non-State actors, including extremist groups, terrorists and criminal networks, present a major challenge in the protection of civilians. Such groups usually act with total disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law. In some situations, the complexity of the conflict has forced aid agencies to negotiate with multiple warring factions for safe passage for humanitarian personnel and relief materials. That invariably makes it hard to reach refugees and internally displaced persons in need of assistance. In such situations, women and girls are often the ones who suffer the most. Nigeria demands that parties to conflict respect international humanitarian law and stop impeding humanitarian assistance.

Finally, the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations is a multidimensional challenge that requires concerted action by multiple stakeholders on several fronts. Nigeria believes that the United Nations, through the Security Council and other relevant entities, is well positioned to take the lead in meeting the challenge.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Mr. President, I thank you for organizing today's open debate. I would also like to thank our three briefers for their sobering contributions to our discussion today. My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

As others before me have said, women and girls are usually the first victims of conflict. They are disproportionately affected by conflict-related displacement, rights deprivation, marginalization and abuse. They are also the prime targets of sexual violence and rape and of forced and child marriages. In 1999, the Security Council took a unanimous decision to systematically address the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Since then, a considerable normative base has been created and progress achieved. The adoption of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) has contributed significantly to furthering the protection of women agenda.

The primary responsibility to protect civilian populations, as we all know, rests with national Governments. The international community has to step in, however, when that responsibility is neglected, whether it be for lack of capacity or political will, or breakdown of the State. As discussed in previous debates on the protection of civilians, effective protection requires clear and well-designed protection mandates that are supported by adequate means, resources and training, among other things. Gender-disaggregated data is essential to informed decisions on the protection of civilians.

To ensure adequate protection of women and girls, implementation of relevant mandates must take into account local specificities, conditions and prevailing customs and practices. For protection purposes, it does matter how far women have to go to get water or food or collect cooking wood, how they can take care of their basic sanitation needs, what kind of terrain they have to cross to safety, whether they can trust their own local officials and police to report their attackers, whether the patrolling patterns of peacekeepers support their movement patterns, and so many other things that women themselves can only best know. Therefore, in all respects, consulting women on the ground to make sure that protection mandates respond to their real protection needs is essential.

The presence of and adequate support for women's protection advisers on the ground, personal commitment of a mission's leadership to gender-sensitive protection, predeployment guidance and training of the military, police and civilian personnel not simply on the basics of civilian protection but on gender-sensitive protection of civilians, and the sharing among missions of effective gender-sensitive protection practices and lessons learned are also important. As others before me have said, more women peacekeepers and police officers in United Nations missions and more women in leadership positions in peacekeeping are equally important.

The strict implementation of a zero-tolerance policy vis-à-vis sexual abuse among peacekeepers is yet another necessary element of the protection of women and girls in a conflict situation. Our briefer, Ms. Ilwad Elman, has eloquently spoken on that topic.

Protection also requires addressing the problem of widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons and the impact of the illicit trade in arms on the lives of women and girls in conflict zones, as our Nigerian colleague has described. The Arms Trade Treaty, which came into effect last December, requires transfers to be assessed against the risk of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and, if duly implemented, would make a real difference to the protection of women agenda.

While physical protection measures in the field are a vital and most immediate form of protection response, promoting an environment supportive of women's participation is key. To this end, all United Nations efforts and presence on the ground have to be synchronized to produce that enabling environment where women and girls will be safe and free to engage in the processes that affect their lives. Nothing enhances the protection of women better that their full involvement and participation in all decision-making processes at all stages of conflict resolution, national reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction.

Let me stress in particular the importance of strengthening the rule of law and pursuit of accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including gender-based violence and rape. Today's briefers have stressed that tackling impunity is paramount in such situations. Relevant work by national justice and prosecution mechanisms is essential, and the international community must invest in strengthening national judicial, prosecution and corrections capacities. Building such capacities in a country emerging from conflict, however, does take time.

It is therefore important that the Security Council act, continue to support accountability and use the full range of means at its disposal to support that end, inter alia by making more systematic use of referrals to the International Criminal Court, mandating commissions of inquiry, acting on the reports of such commissions and reinforcing the application of gender parameters among the designation criteria in all of the sanctions regimes. The greater involvement of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict and children and armed conflict in the work of the sanctions committees and their interaction and exchanges of information with respective panels of experts would strengthen sanctions committees' focus on violence against women and allow for perpetrators to be pursued and sanctioned with greater determination. That in itself would strengthen the deterrence element vis-à-vis the perpetrators and support the protection work carried out on the ground.

I did not intend to speak today on specific country situations. However, I would like to conclude my remarks by responding to the comments made by the Russian delegation. We appreciate its concern regarding the growing number of civilian casualties and women suffering in eastern Ukraine. However, as we know, the best protection for the women of eastern Ukraine is in Russia's hands. It is up to Russia to put an end to those horrors by cutting off all supplies — military, financial and personnel-related — to its proxies, the illegal militants, whose abysmal lawlessness has been amply documented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports presented here

in the Council, and whose impunity has contributed in the most direct of ways to the suffering that women in eastern Ukraine are enduring.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate. I would also like to thank all the briefers for their statements and to welcome the participation of non-governmental organizations in this Council meeting.

Malaysia reiterates the importance it attaches to general principles on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and in particular to the protection of women and girls in such situations. As a member of the Council, Malaysia is keenly aware of the significant responsibility shouldered in that regard and reiterates its commitment to continue to contribute to efforts further implementing such principles.

We continue to note with deep concern that in many violent crises around the world, non-combatant women, girls and children comprise the vast majority of those in desperate need of protection and humanitarian assistance. Malaysia shares the assessment that women and girls are particularly vulnerable and face specific risks in conflict situations. We are deeply disturbed by the increasing trend of the deliberate targeting of women and girls by belligerents in violent conflicts.

While great strides have been made in recognizing the differentiated impact of armed conflict on women and girls and in the corresponding efforts to respond to their needs since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Malaysia is of the view that more could be done. In that regard, one key aspect that could benefit from more focused attention relates to the tendency of policymakers to view women and girls as victims and to design protection measures based on that perception. Malaysia holds the view that much more could be done to recognize the role of women as agents for action. Such recognition could further empower them to play an active role in creating a protection environment that comprehensively addresses their immediate and long-term needs.

We all agree that the protection of civilians is one of the most visible and key functions of a significant number of existing peacekeeping operations. In that context, Malaysia reaffirms its support for prioritizing the protection of civilians mandates of those peacekeeping missions. Given the unique and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, Malaysia also believes it is relevant to assess whether current protection of civilians efforts adequately address their concerns and needs. In that regard, we note that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed a three-tiered approach to the protection of civilians and believe that such approach provides a useful way to frame the discussions on the protection of civilians in general and the protection of women and girls in particular.

Additionally, we support the Gender Forward Looking Strategy 2014-2018 and hope that it will be fully implemented in the context of fulfilling protection of civilians mandates, including by ensuring that an appropriate number of gender advisers and women protection advisers are deployed to peacekeeping missions where mandated. Malaysia also wishes to underscore that Blue Helmets mandated to protect women and girls must be held to the highest standards. Therefore, we call for the strict implementation of the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel.

Peacekeeping mandates have evolved over time to become more complex and multidimensional. In that regard, Malaysia shares the view that peacekeepers and civilian personnel deployed in the field must be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge so that they may navigate complex environments involving multiple actors fulfilling diverse roles and mandates. Therefore, it is important that peacekeeping missions mandated to carry out protection of civilians tasks are also supported with adequate means to do so, including through the provision of resources and training for that purpose. In that connection, Malaysia believes that standardized training is especially important to ensure a clear understanding of the general peacekeeping mandate, including the protection of civilians component where applicable, and to take into account gender considerations and sensitivity.

Mindful of the need for such multidimensional training, the Malaysian Peacekeeping Centre has and continues to collaborate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide training on various aspects of peacekeeping for countries in Asia and beyond. To date, the Centre has provided training to roughly 2,000 peacekeepers from over 50 countries. Most recently, the Centre, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme and several donor Governments, including Japan and Norway, has embarked on a new training programme to cater to the complex and multidimensional nature of new

peacekeeping mandates. The current phase of the project, which runs from March 2014 to December 2015, involves developing training manuals and modules on gender, cultural diversity in peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians.

Malaysia believes that creating an environment conducive to the long-term protection of women and girls is as important as addressing immediate concerns in conflict situations. In the context of post-conflict peacebuilding, the establishment of a secure environment that would allow for development and growth and for the building of domestic institutions and capacities must be prioritized. Properly implemented, such initiatives would contribute positively to preventing a relapse into conflict.

The active participation of women and girls must be encouraged so as to ensure that they can contribute to ensuring that adequate strategies are developed in post-conflict settings. For example, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes must be able to address the needs of former women and girl combatants, who often face stigmatization for their non-traditional involvement in conflict.

Given that women are often thrust into positions of responsibility in times of conflict and in post-conflict scenarios, Malaysia believes that women and girls must be given the tools and the opportunity to rebuild their lives through education and economic opportunities. On a related note, ensuring accountability and justice for serious violations is also a crucial means of guaranteeing long-term protection for women and girls. We believe that tackling impunity through strengthened justice mechanisms should be made a priority.

We hope that the discussion today provides valuable perspectives that will be taken into account in the various review processes that are ongoing this year, including the global study and high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The intersection of the reviews on peace operations, peacebuilding and women and peace and security provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the rights of women and girls are threaded throughout the efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Mrs. Kawar (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to thank you, Sir, for your work as President of the Council for this month. I wish you every success in your work. I also thank all speakers for their very interesting contributions.

I wish to begin by stressing the importance of today's debate concerning the protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. Significant progress has been made since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent relevant resolutions in establishing standards and legal frameworks to protect women and girls in armed conflict. Those resolutions are all considered to be turning points in the way in which the international community views the humanitarian needs of women in conflict and post-conflicts situations.

Despite all this, we have seen an unprecedented increase in the number of victims, especially in the Middle East and Africa. Indeed, thousands of women and girls in Syria have been victims of sexual violence, including rape. In the Central African Republic, the rape of women and girls has facilitated the widespread transmission of the HIV virus. In South Sudan, the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2014/181) also cites incidents of abduction and forced marriage.

The fight against impunity for the perpetrators of such crimes against women and girls in armed conflict is one of the greatest challenges that we face on the ground. In that context, we stress the importance of United Nations assistance to help the countries concerned in strengthening their legal and judicial institutions. Those countries must be able to prosecute the guilty and ensure justice in order to guarantee the protection of civilians, especially women and girls. In some cases, and to that end the international community must establish commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions to investigate these crimes.

We also invite the Security Council to consider strengthening its cooperation with the International Criminal Court in referring the most odious crimes. In that context, peacekeeping operations must also cooperate with national institutions to heighten awareness and exert pressure to provide greater protection and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. United Nations entities must also assist countries in building a culture of respect and equality and in establishing legal frameworks for women.

Another major challenge is the difficulty of compelling non-State actors to respect international humanitarian law. We must adopt sustainable strategies, based on cooperation between the international community and United Nations authorities, for prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes against women

and girls. We must also ensure that peace agreements do not undermine that responsibility.

To the best of its abilities, Jordan is seeking to provide the best possible protection to Syrian refugees, in particular women and girls. All refugees receive a human rights handbook when they arrive in Jordan to inform them of their rights and prevent their exploitation. Refugees are welcome in public schools; there are today some 100,000 Syrian girls studying in our schools within and outside the camps. Jordanian organizations also organize health-care training for Syrian women and girls.

We have taken significant measures to protect women and girls in conflict situations. We have strengthened the participation of women in peacekeeping operations and in decision-making processes. The Jordanian armed forces have enhanced the role of women in the military by increasing their participation in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions, and in the medical services by increasing their presence in field hospitals in conflict zones. Jordanian military women have played an important role in providing care for Syrian refugees. We believe that the participation of women in United Nations missions must be a priority, and stress the importance of organizing training in that area.

In conclusion, we believe that the protection of civilians, in particular women and girls, should be addressed independently of other issues related to women. As we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we must strengthen our activities in this field in order to build a better future for women and girls.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): I should like to thank and congratulate the Chilean presidency on convening this open debate on the important issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, with particular emphasis on protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang and Ms. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy of the International Committee of the Red Cross, for their briefings. I extend special greetings to Ms. Ilwad Elman, representing the non-governmental organization community, whose important advocacy role we acknowledge. We were particularly touched by Ms. Elman's eloquent plea.

On this occasion, I would like to express our recognition to the Secretary-General for his long-standing commitment to the defence and protection of victims of armed conflict, particularly women, girls and children.

As a matter of principle, and based on our own experience, Angola supports the peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and negotiations, in the conviction that addressing the root causes of conflicts contributes to sustainable solutions. We strongly believe that prevention is still the best way to address potential conflicts situations; that States bear the primary responsibility for the protection of their civilian population, in situations both of peace and conflict; and that the international community has a subsidiary responsibility in addressing that very serious problem.

The latest report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2013/689) underlines the fact that women are the main victims of all kinds of violence, including murder, mutilation, rape, sexual abuse, arbitrary arrest, abduction and forced marriage. Women and girls are the main victims of attacks on hospitals and schools, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability in conflict and post-conflicts situations.

We welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security of 23 September 2014 (S/2014/693), as well as the adoption on 28 October 2014 of presidential statement S/PRST/2014/21, on the special needs of internally displaced and refugee girls and women. We share the recognition that significant progress has been made at the normative level with the adoption of resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013), establishing the greater involvement of the Security Council in issues relating to women and peace and security.

In addition, the two high-level commitments related to combating sexual violence — namely, the declaration on the economic empowerment of women for peacebuilding and the inclusion of criteria based on gender in the Arms Trade Treaty — supplement the framework I outlined earlier. However, great challenges lie in the implementation and maintenance of the progress achieved so far.

The year 2015 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which, inter alia, recognizes the importance of strengthening women's leadership in conflict prevention, conflict resolution

and peacebuilding. We are confident that the high-level review of this seminal resolution will provide an important boost for the achievements of the objectives it outlines. In a crucial year for strengthening the status of women and the national and international levels, strong political will and commitment to resolution 1325 (2000) will leverage women's role in national, regional and international institutions, thus promoting their participation in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. In that connection, we are convinced that the expanded involvement of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding can make a crucial difference in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Angola attaches great importance to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, with particular emphasis on the protection of women and children in accordance with international law, international humanitarian law and standards set out in international legal instruments on human rights and the rights of refugees. The empowerment of women contributes to the stability of societies emerging from armed conflict, while the promotion of their rights reduces their vulnerability and strengthens their ability for self-advocacy, especially by satisfying their basic needs to education, training, employment, legal and psychological assistance and access to health services, including reproductive control in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape and sexual abuse.

Angola's experience has been quite positive, with gender promotion at the forefront of the Government's programmes, as well as recognition of women's importance in political, economic and social development, including their vital contribution to the consolidation of peace and the reconstruction of the country. We have adopted a strong legal and operational position on the prevention of sexual violence. We consider attacks against the rights of women to be totally unacceptable and condemnable, and we deplore the fact that sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon and as a tactic of war.

The Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy in relation to sexual abuse and exploitation by members of peacekeeping missions and by humanitarian personnel, including their strict adherence to the code of conduct, is a welcome development in the fight against such detrimental conduct. It is our understanding that greater coordination and interaction between the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations can result in the development of more effective strategies for the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations and ensure greater opportunities for the exercise of their rights, as well as the satisfaction of their needs.

Moreover, we support the inclusion of additional women military and police personnel in peacekeeping operations. We are also of the view that special attention should be given to the issue of sexual violence in the formulation of United Nations mission mandates and to mission engagement with communities as a fundamental element for the establishment of confidence with communities where missions are mandated to protect. However, engagement with local communities, including with women, should be carried out in a safe and respectful manner, so that it does not put women at further risk when they share information, which is always very precious given the essential role played by women in their communities.

Finally, Angola looks forward to the forthcoming high-level review of the progress made and the obstacles encountered in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the global, regional and national levels. We will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict and post-conflict areas, while paying particular attention to the protection needs of women and girls, thereby renewing our commitment to respect international humanitarian law.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, allow me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict on the theme "Protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings". We welcome the concept note (S/2015/32, annex) prepared to guide our deliberations. We also welcome Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Ms. Helen Durham and Ms. Ilwad Elman and we thank them for their valuable briefings.

Armed conflicts and the recurrence of violence in post-conflict situations specifically and disproportionately affect women and children. We often receive alarming reports of unacceptable acts of violence that have been perpetrated against them. The inequality, lack of access to justice, restricted or no participation and representation at all levels and areas of society that women face daily are exacerbated in situations of armed conflict, thereby increasing their vulnerability.

The Government of the Bolivarian Repubublic of Venezuela has established a development model focused on the human being, in which equality between men and women and human rights for all are guaranteed. The Bolivarian Constitution of 1999, considered one of the most progressive in world, incorporates and institutionalizes gender equality in our society. It also enshrines gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion. And it ensures the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. The inalienable rights of children are also protected by our Constitution.

Venezuelan women have a leading role in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our country, as well as in the decision-making process, thereby contributing directly to the building of a new social order based on justice and the law. Equality and gender equality are State policies in Venezuela. Implementing the gender perspective in public policies, defending the rights of women and promoting women's empowerment and leadership form a substantial part of our social policies.

Violence against women is the most repugnant aspect of religious intolerance and violence in society. For that reason, Venezuela strongly condemns discrimination, exclusion and violence against women. We therefore address promoting women's rights as a priority of our agenda at the United Nations and throughout the world, especially with an emphasis on those places where armed conflict has destroyed a part or all of the social fabric.

While women's participation, representation and leadership in the national life of countries have a crucial role in protecting the rights of women and children, it is equally important that women be involved in all areas and at all levels of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. It is inconsistent to pretend to properly care for half of the civilian population affected by armed conflict — women and children — without understanding the human characteristics and historical legacy of their social and political vulnerability. Neglecting the vision, needs, interests, experiences and capabilities of this population serves to undermine any initiative that aims to effectively and comprehensively address efforts at maintaining and consolidating peace.

Resolution 1325 (2000), adopted 15 years ago, has among its goals fostering the participation of women in the police, military and civilian components of the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. However, the results were not as expected: women's representation does not yet exceed 10 per cent. That commitment remains unfinished business for the United Nations.

We firmly believe that the participation of women in all levels and areas related to the protection of civilians greatly enhances the management of peacekeeping operations, making it more appropriate, assertive and comprehensive. We also believe that the participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations facilitates and enhances access, support and follow-up for women and children affected by armed conflict; broadens information-gathering capacity, including for reporting and preventing sexual violence; and has a positive effect on the promotion of gender equality and security of the local populations.

In short, we believe that the participation of women in United Nations missions is crucial to prevent the discrimination, marginalization and exclusion of and violence against women and girls, and to protect and meet the needs of local populations. We therefore call on the Organization tirelessly to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000). Reports to the Secretary-General on violence against women and children in ongoing armed conflicts and peacekeeping missions are unacceptable and must be investigated, and those responsible severely punished. We cannot allow inaction to persist. We must ensure that all peacekeeping operations incorporate broad women's participation and that their main mandates always include the protection of children and women. We must do better as an Organization to go beyond mere words and achieve results in alleviating the human tragedy facing these people.

Our delegation agrees with the Secretary General's statement in his report on the work of the Organization, that

> "humankind will not enjoy the peace and prosperity that it seeks as long as half the population faces violence and discrimination and mindsets that see women and girls as second-class citizens." (*A/69/1, para. 7*)

Venezuela reaffirms the distinction between protecting civilians and the concept of the responsibility to protect. The protection of civilians has gradually been accepted, universalized and codified in international law over the course of decades. The Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols represent the

highest international legal expression thereof. The concept of the responsibility to protect, however, is nothing more than a political statement on which there is no consensus within the Organization.

A fundamental distinction between the two approaches concerns the use of force. The responsibility to protect implies military action against the sovereignty of a State without its consent to bring an end to alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law falling within the definition of four specific crimes that are often not verified in a transparent and independent way. The protection of civilians, on the other hand, does not address the strategic use of force and is applied in the context of full respect for the Charter of the United Nations and the guiding principles of peacekeeping operations, including the consent of a host State or parties to a conflict.

It is important always to recall that distinction, as the protection of civilians must never be used as an excuse for military intervention violating a country's sovereignty against its will, fomenting regime change, destroying its infrastructure, dismantling its institutions and leaving its citizens in chaos. We have all witnessed such examples in recent history, in which the Security Council has played a leading role.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm our absolute commitment to the empowerment and protection of women, and to thank you, Sir, for having convened this important debate. However, given the importance of the topic, in our view, our discussion should transcend this setting and be held in the General Assembly, which is the universal democratic forum par excellence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Chile.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Chile proposed this open debate on the challenges of protecting women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict situations because the protection of civilians in armed conflict is one of the most pressing issues before the Security Council. Promoting respect for humanitarian principles is among our shared actions and responsibilities to protect civilians — obligations that the United Nations assumes when a State is unable or unwilling to apply these principles.

The challenges of protecting women and girls in armed conflicts and their aftermath call for us to help promote and ensure the equality of women before the law and justice. In that context, all discriminatory provisions against women that increase their vulnerability in conflict situations, such as those relating to citizenship and access to land, must be repealed.

It is crucial to address threats to women's safety by promoting and protecting their rights and by empowering them to fully enjoy those rights, taking account of the particular needs. Likewise, we must eradicate practices that are unacceptable regardless of sociocultural or religious context, such as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

During 2014, the Council addressed humanitarian situations affecting millions of women and girls, many of them displaced or refugees. Serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, such as those committed by Boko Haram, in particular against women and girls, including abductions, are abhorrent acts and must cease. We reiterate the call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, including the school-age girls abducted in April 2014.

We welcome the contributions of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to make available to those providing assistance concrete programmes and measures to ensure the protection of women and girls such as promoting the equal protection of women before the law and their access to justice; integrating women in all peace processes and peace agreements; and ensuring their participation in the planning and implementation of recovery and reconstruction programmes in post-conflict rehabilitation.

The United Nations and the Security Council must take a rights-based approach in addressing the multidimensional character of gender issues, thus rejecting relativism and disregard for universal rights. This should be part of a broader set of measures to prevent violence against women in armed conflict or post-conflict situations, guaranteeing reparations for and the reintegration of victims, as well as fighting against impunity. These concerns must not be left out as we build a comprehensive post-2015 development agenda.

Resolution 1325 (2000), together with its related resolutions, constitutes a turning point for addressing

the major impact of armed conflict on women and girls, who are victims of violence and surrounded by barriers, discrimination and inequality. The document also provides solutions in terms of participation, protection, prevention and post-conflict recovery — the so-called "four Ps" — which must be supported with sustainable budgets for their implementation.

Gender must be mainstreamed throughout international peace and security decision-making bodies, mechanisms and processes, and integrated into the formulation and implementation of the mission mandates and the work of the Council. That should include briefings from the relevant organizations and Special Envoys as a preventive and early-warning mechanism.

The Council's upcoming 2015 high-level review to measure progress on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the global study on its implementation provide an opportunity to take advantage of the experience we have gained and to improve the capabilities of States and of the United Nations system in this area. We are convinced of the need for synergy between this review and those related to the peacebuilding architecture, peacekeeping operations and the special political missions of the Secretary-General.

It would also be useful to conduct a working meeting to analyse and recommend practical measures that would complement the incorporation of the protection of women and girls and a gender perspective into the architecture to protect civilians within the United Nations. As part of the agenda for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, a fourth topic, focused on addressing the needs of persons in conflict, could be an interesting vehicle to consider these issues.

We trust that this debate will strengthen political support to achieve the effective protection of civilians in the terms enshrined in international law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to be able to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I would also like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be provided properly. I wish to inform all concerned that we will be carrying this open debate right through the lunch hour, as we have a very large number of speakers.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden. I would also like to extend our sincere condolences on the passing away of our friend, Mr. Mårten Grunditz.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): I thank you, Mr. President, for your kind words about Mårten.

I am honoured to be back at the United Nations and to speak on the same topic but in a different capacity. I am now today in one person Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish, so I speak on behalf of all the Nordic countries.

I wish to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. The role and influence of civil society in preventing conflict and building peace are essential and must be supported.

For more than 150 years, the international community has been in agreement that warfare should be made less inhumane through the rules and principles of international humanitarian law. Civilians should be protected in armed conflict, and we need to prevent and to respond to mass atrocity crimes in accordance with the responsibility to protect. But those rules and principles are challenged and sometimes even ignored. Civilians are particularly exposed in today's complex and often protracted conflicts, as we have seen in the Middle East and in West and Central Africa. That is also the case in Syria and Iraq, for instance, where hospitals and schools are being made the actual targets of warfare. That must stop. The laws of war were written during a time when only men were defined as combatants and the responsibilities of women were seen as far distant from the battlefield. A stronger gender perspective needs to be applied to international humanitarian law.

Women, and especially girls, are particularly exposed to violence in conflict. Violence against women affects one third of all women globally. The violence is often amplified in areas affected by conflict. As we see in many parts of the world today, extremism and terrorism are prominent features of conflict situations, constituting new kinds of threats to women's rights and lives and causing flight and displacement. We need to

prevent and combat such violations of women's and girls' fundamental human rights.

Gender inequalities lie at the heart of the issue. Progress on gender equality and women's rights is a goal in its own right, but it also remains a critical factor in achieving poverty reduction and sustainable development. Gender equality helps to prevent armed conflicts and sexual violence in armed conflicts. We must therefore firmly address the root causes of gender inequality. That can be done by changing laws, norms, practices and attitudes in societies that are denying women's and girls' human rights. It can also be done by enacting laws, including on equal rights to inheritance, and by adopting policies that ensure women's political and economic empowerment and secure sexual and reproductive health and rights and improve women's security and guarantee the right to quality education for all women and girls.

The fight against impunity for sexual and gender-based violence is also crucial, as I know from a previous position I held. Each State has a duty and a responsibility to investigate and prosecute such crimes. It is primarily at the domestic level that solutions to the impunity gap must be found. The role of the International Criminal Court is complementary, but nevertheless crucial in ensuring that accountability is achieved. We therefore welcome and support the undertakings, and in particular the special policy, of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in order to more efficiently investigate and prosecute sexual and gender-based violence crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court. We recall the unique capacity of Justice Rapid Response, in close cooperation with UN-Women, to address situations where expertise is needed for investigating such crimes.

Women are not only victims, but first and foremost actors and agents of change. Sustainable peace and security can never be achieved if half the population is excluded. In excluding women, we are also excluding the contribution of those sectors of society that are considered as feminine or to be women's duties. Those often include raising children, education, health care and taking care of the elderly. When those sectors, which are vital to the long-term success of nations, are not adequately represented in decision-making, it is to the detriment of peace and security. We need the participation of both women and men in formal and informal processes, in mediation, peace negotiations and in humanitarian and peace-building efforts to bring in new angles, solutions and perspectives to problems.

This year provides an unique opportunity to assess and accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Several critical reviews are under way — the review of peace operations, the review of the peacebuilding architecture, the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2015 high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000). In order to ensure coherence, all those reviews, and especially their recommendations and outcomes, should take into account the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) objectives in a more coordinated manner. To promote the women and peace and security agenda is not an isolated issue, it is a major part of the peace and security agenda.

There has been an increase in the number of mandates of United Nations missions that include references to women and peace and security, but that is not enough. All mandates should be based on a gender-sensitive conflict analysis in order to also be tailored to the security needs and to ensuring the participation of women and girls. Gender issues should be part of reporting requirements, and all United Nations missions should have a gender adviser at the strategic level, supplied with resources relevant to his or her tasks. Leadership is critical in ensuring progress on this agenda, at the highest levels of the United Nations as in Member States, and I am glad to hear that come out of this discussion.

Lastly, to underline the importance of the post-2015 development agenda, the Nordic countries support goal 5, on gender equality, and goal 16, on freedom from violence and peaceful societies, proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development. These goals together include targets concerning the prevention of all kinds of violence, including violence against women and girls. We believe that the post-2015 development agenda represents a unique opportunity to address violence against women, including sexual violence, on a fundamental level. It is a chance to make real progress.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I would like to join others before me in thanking our briefers for this open debate. I would also like to thank the delegation of Chile for

having circulated the concept note to guide our debate (S/2015/32, annex).

As a country whose representative, Hansa Mehta, introduced the focus on women in the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, India is strongly committed to the rights of women globally. My delegation speaks on the subject of our debate today on the basis of extensive experience in United Nations peacekeeping operations over the past six decades. India, as the single largest contributor to these operations, having sent over 180,000 troops to 43 of the 68 peacekeeping operations mandated so far by the Council, is deeply conscious of the significance of the topic of this open debate today.

We are committed to a zero-tolerance policy on violence against women. When the first United Nations peacekeeping operations were mandated by the Council, we contributed our troops to ensure that these operations were successful and that they would result in keeping the peace. This objective of keeping the peace was the best guarantor of the protection of civilians, especially women, caught up in armed conflicts.

Until a few years ago, our experience was that the traditional mandate of United Nations peacekeeping, anchored in the three principles of consent of parties to the dispute, impartiality and the non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate, were sufficient to keep the peace and ensure the protection of civilians in the area where United Nations peacekeepers were deployed.

However, the threat faced by civilians in armed conflict situations has undergone a significant change in recent years, especially due to the change in the nature of armed conflicts. Whereas earlier, our peacekeepers were deployed to keep the peace between States, we are now witnessing a steady increase in the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers in situations of internal conflict within Member States. It is a matter of concern that most of these situations appear to be open-ended, often due to the breakdown of national governance structures within the country, as well as to the evident inability of the Council to address and nurture sustainable political solutions to such conflict situations. The impact of this instability and violence has been felt by the most vulnerable of the civilian populations, especially women and girls.

As the concept note points out, the increased participation of women in redressing such situations could make a significant difference in finding a solution to this problem. The participation of women in all aspects of the prevention and resolution of conflicts is an important policy measure that the Council should encourage when mandating peace operations.

India was the first State Member of the United Nations to implement such a policy when we contributed an all-female formed police unit to the United Nations Mission in Liberia in 2007. As former United States Secretary of State Hilary Clinton told the Council in 2009, we have set an example that must be repeated in United Nations peacekeeping missions all over the world. The Council should make an assessment of whether this has actually happened since then, or not.

Our experience in Liberia showed that the actual requirements for addressing issues confronting women in armed conflict were related to the concept of peacebuilding, rather than peacekeeping. We believe that the time has come for the Council to disaggregate the complex multidimensional nature of its peacekeeping mandates and focus on addressing issues confronting women in armed conflict situations through focused peacebuilding activities, so that the transition to a post-conflict society can be sustainable. Such an approach would give greater scope to humanitarian and development actors to take appropriate action against the exploitation and abuse of women caught in situations of armed conflict. The concept note stresses the importance of women's empowerment in this context. We would underscore the inherent linkage between women's empowerment and development in order to sustain the peace.

In conclusion, we would like to refer to the recent establishment of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations by the Secretary-General, who has made a conscious effort to enable the Panel to focus on women's issues. We would recommend that the Council forward the conclusions of this open debate, including the views expressed by Member States not members of the Council, like us, to the Panel for its consideration.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I congratulate you and the Mission of Chile for having organized this meeting and for having drawn up a very informative concept note (S/2015/32, annex).

(*spoke in English*)

I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang, as well as Ms. Helen Durham and Ms. Ilwad Elman, for their enlightening presentations.

Today's meeting can be seen as the starting point of a vital year for gender issues at the United Nations. While the Security Council prepares for its high-level review on women and peace and security, we expect both the report of the Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations and the results of the 10-year review of the peacebuilding architecture to be informed by a progressive gender perspective, and we associate ourselves with the words of the Foreign Minister of Sweden in highlighting the importance of coordination in that respect. Brazil looks forward to cooperating constructively with these interrelated endeavours.

Women play a vital role in all societies and cultures. Unfortunately, however, they continue to find many obstacles in terms of equality of opportunity, access to justice, economic and social rights, and participation in decision-making systems. Their protection, advancement and empowerment should be at the heart of all activities fostered by the Organization.

Any debate on the protection of civilians must consider, first and foremost, that preventing armed conflict from arising is the most effective way to shield the civilian population, including women and girls, from the dangers of war. In this regard, we cannot stress enough the importance of using all political and diplomatic instruments available, including good offices and mediation, to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. The spiral of violence that leads to war, displacement and abuses against vulnerable groups such as women and girls is not unavoidable. It is often the consequence of misguided judgment, questionable concepts of morality, and an inability to learn from experience.

The use of force carries the risk of causing unintended casualties and disseminating violence and instability. Even when force is employed with the aim of protecting civilians, it does not make collateral damage or unintended destabilization less tragic. In this sense, full compliance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law is required of those attempting to safeguard the well-being and integrity of women and girls. Bending the rules weakens the multilateral system and has brought much misery to civilians.

In this regard, it is crucial that the Council employ a non-selective approach when discussing the protection of civilians. One cannot condemn the horrid attacks in Syria, Afghanistan and Nigeria while remaining silent before blatant violations against civilians in Gaza. All violations must be condemned with equal vigour. Every civilian casualty is a tragedy and every life should be equally valued by the Council.

As the report on the strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2014/956) recently stressed, the protection of civilians in armed conflicts may also be carried out through political and civilian processes, reconciliation efforts at the community level, and the establishment of a protective environment. None of this can be accomplished without including women in a meaningful way.

The presence of women among negotiators substantially increases the effectiveness and legitimacy of peacekeeping and peacemaking initiatives, from mediation efforts to power-sharing agreements. The same logic applies to the long-term processes of reconstruction, recovery and peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflicts. The greater participation of women in the civilian and military leadership of peacekeeping missions, as seen in the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, would be a positive step in that regard.

The Brazilian Government is translating these calls into concrete action: in 2014, both the Ministry of External Relations and the Ministry of Defense put in place mechanisms to foster gender equality and recommended women-oriented policies within the Foreign Service and the Armed Forces of Brazil. We have also sought to enhance protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups in regional and multilateral forums. For instance, the differentiated protection needs of women refugees were given special emphasis in the Cartagena+30 Brazil Declaration, adopted by Latin American and Caribbean countries in Brasilia last December.

Physical protection, while clearly vital, is merely part of the range of gender-oriented measures that the United Nations and its Members should promote. We must also strive to advance the position of women in society at all times, not only during conflicts and in

their aftermath. Empowering and emancipating women requires concrete and specific policies to foster their social inclusion and economic self-determination, while tackling all forms of descrimination and impunity. Men must be mobilized, as in the He-For-She solidarity campaign for gender equality, which we fully endorse.

The benefits of mustering the support of women in war-torn societies have also been observed in many of the situations being followed by the Peacebuilding Commission.

Social development is the ultimate form of protection for vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls. Gender equality and the protection of women should be everyday concerns. The whole range of political, humanitarian and development-related bodies of the Organization, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and UN-Women, should be part and parcel of our joint efforts towards a world where women and girls are not only protected from violence, but also fully empowered in every way.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the focus of today's debate on the needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. Women and girls face discrimination and violations during all phases of conflict The use of sexual and gender-based violence as a tactic of war is just one of such violations. Conflict often increases women's responsibilities as care-givers and breadwinners for extended families, and does so under difficult circumstances. A vast majority of the displaced population is made up of women and girls.

Almost 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we can see an important level of political commitment and activity in the field of women and peace and security. However, at the same time, we have been witnessing a series of troubling developments linked to conflict leading to mass displacements, humanitarian catastrophes and serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Women and girls are often the main victims. We should therefore strengthen our resolve to implement, in a systematic and sustainable way at national, regional and global levels, the commitments that we have made. We have the policies and mechanisms in place, but we need to make more efficient and better use of them. We need to make sure that civilians, including women and girls, are protected during conflict, and that humanitarian aid reaches those most in need. Given the changing nature of conflicts, we need to develop innovative ways to communicate principles of international humanitarian law and to ensure humanitarian access. The rotection and relief provided must correspond to the needs of the whole civilian population.

We need to systematically tailor humanitarian responses so that they address the specific needs faced by women and girls during armed conflict. That can include conducting gender-sensitive needs assessments and collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data, as well as making progress in linking relief, rehabilitation and development. The EU continues to address the specific needs of women and girls through gender- and age-sensitive programming, using a three-track approach that combines mainstreaming, targeted actions and capacity-building. The European Union has also introduced a gender-age marker, a tool to assess how strongly EU-funded humanitarian actions integrate gender and age considerations.

We note with concern the continued sexual violence, rape, forced marriage, forced prostitution, trafficking and sexual slavery that characterize an increasing number of conflicts, as well as the continuing use of sexual and gender-based violence as a tactic of war. We welcome the clear global, regional and national commitments taken to tackle this issue, including those made at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in June 2014, the call to action on protecting girls and women in emergencies, the framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union and the joint communiqués between Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and an increasing number of Governments.

We must end impunity for crimes of sexual violence, which must be properly investigated and prosecuted. In that regard, we emphasize the significant

advancement in international law made by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as by non-permanent international criminal tribunals, in combating sexual violence in conflict. We commend UN-Women and Justice Rapid Response for their roster of experts specifically trained in investigating sexual and gender-based crimes. We also welcome the increased use of the human rights- and sexual violence-related criteria in the Security Council sanctions regimes. We welcome the Secretary-General's guidance note on reparations for sexual violence, published in June 2014.

Attention to the protection of women and girls and their participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding must be transformed from an exception to a standard practice, through systematic inclusion in policy guidelines, codes of conduct and training. It should also receive the attention of senior management in missions and other conflict resolution and peacebuilding mechanisms. Seventy per cent of the EU's own missions deployed in 2013, including all military operations, had at least one gender adviser-trainer. The EU continues its work on specific training modules on human rights and gender in crisis management, ensuring a focus on sexual violence in armed conflicts. Gender advisers must be deployed in all United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We also call for the further deployment of UN-Women protection advisers.

To improve the situation of women and girls, we need to make better use of the international legal and policy instruments. The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women's general recommendation No. 30, on tackling challenges to gender equality in situations of conflict, is a landmark achievement. The EU welcomes the development of a guidebook to support more effective reporting by States parties to the Committee. We also underline the importance of reviewing our progress on women and peace and security in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The resilience of women and girls in situations of conflict and displacement must be acknowledged, and their capacity to be active agents in conflict resolution and in building lasting peace harnessed. The principles of protection and participation go hand in hand. We continue to implement an EU systematic plan on women and peace and security: the comprehensive approach to the implementation of these resolutions. The second report on the implementation of the comprehensive approach, from February 2014, also sets the EU priority areas for the next reporting period of 2013-2015, which include transitional justice, women's political participation and economic empowerment, women's involvement in peace processes and preventing sexual violence in conflict. Seventeen European Union member States have adopted national action plans with the aim of strengthening their action on resolution 1325 (2000).

We look forward to the global Review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) this year. We hope that it provides an additional push to make all our commitments on women and peace and security a reality. Preparations for the review will be conducted in parallel with the peacebuilding review and the review of peace operations. That provides us with an opportunity that we must not miss in order to embed a strong gender dimension in the United Nations peace and security architecture. The upcoming review of peace operations should aim at achieving a model of peacekeeping that puts a strong focus on the protection of civilians. Tackling sexual violence should be a priority. United Nations peace operations should play a critical role in the implementation of the responsibility to protect, as they are often in the front line when a State is unable or unwilling to protect civilians from the risk of atrocity crimes. In this context, United Nations operations need to be staffed and equipped in a way that allows staff to better interact with the local population and civil society organizations, with the overarching aim of responding to warning signals and reducing the risk of atrocity crimes.

This is a year of reviews at the United Nations, including the reviews of resolution 1325 (2000), peacebuilding and peace operations. We need to work together to ensure that these parallel processes — which are to shape the way we deal with peace and security — are ambitious and strategic. We have a great opportunity to advance the cause of the protection of civilians and to redouble our efforts to alleviate the suffering of women and girls who are trapped in the dynamics of violent conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Schieb (Germany): At the outset, let me thank all the briefers for their insightful presentations, as well as Chile for having organized this open debate. I also

thank Ms. Elman for her statement on behalf of civil society.

Mr. Llanos took the Chair.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians.

Women and girls face special challenges and needs in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. They are particularly vulnerable and affected, since they face an increased risk of sexual violence. Rape, forced pregnancy, sexual trafficking or enslavement, and many other forms of brutal abuse have become vicious tactics of warfare for many parties to conflict. As we speak, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram — just to name two of the many vicious perpetrators — are killing, raping and abducting women and girls, and leaving thousands behind forever traumatized. In Syria, indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, and indiscriminate shelling continue to result in deaths, injuries and the displacement of civilians, including women and children. In December alone, at least 107 civilians including 27 children, were reportedly killed in Aleppo as a result of aerial attacks and shelling.

This has further devastating effects. Many women and girls in conflict areas, as well as boys, no longer leave their homes out of fear. As a consequence, they have no access to medical care or education. In such a situation, we face the risk of a generation of lost children without an education who bear the trauma of war. And they are the ones who are supposed to rebuild their society after the end of a conflict.

Women play an equally key role in post-conflict situations. Armed conflicts often lead to fundamental changes to the social fabric. Many children grow up without a father, and women have to assume more responsibility if society wants to advance. Therefore, resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent related resolutions focus on the two aspects of strengthening the participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and incorporating policies and procedures that protect women from gender-based crimes, such as rape and sexual assault.

From the outset, Germany has been a strong supporter of resolution 1325 (2000) within the United Nations framework, as well as in terms of activities and project support. Let me mention some aspects that are particularly important for the better protection and strengthening of women and girls in armed conflict and in post-conflict situations.

First, for peacekeeping or peacebuilding missions, gender-sensitive predeployment training is essential. Germany believes that standardized gender-sensitive training for participants in United Nations-led peace missions should be made a prerequisite for deployment. Nationally, our Federal Ministry of Defence attaches particular importance to gender-related issues in intercultural and regionally specific preparations for international operations. Moreover, it regularly conducts courses to train women for peace and security, together with police and other agencies.

The second element is accountability. If perpetrators can expect to go unpunished, parties to conflict are more likely to use sexual violence as a tactic of warfare. Nowhere is this more evident than in Syria, where the regime and the foreign militias it has invited, as well as some extremist groups, are killing and abusing women daily without any fear of punishment. Accountability is also crucial for reconciliation. If hatred and fear prevail in a society, peace will not be possible. Obviously, accountability is first and foremost the responsibility of each State. Therefore, national capacities need to be built and supported. It is crucial that victims not be afraid to speak up. Justice and security sector reforms are essential. When effective prosecution in a State concerned is not possible, then the only way to achieve justice for victims and survivors is to transfer these cases to international jurisdiction, including to the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, victims of sexual violence need as much assistance as possible to find their way back to a normal life. We have to set up the necessary capacities in the given region. Countries that participated in the Berlin Conference on the Syrian refugee situation last October committed themselves in the Berlin declaration to taking action against sexual violence. Germany funds a number of relevant projects in that respect. To name but a few, in Iraq we have helped to set up six centres for psychological trauma treatment and a social forum for victims of the Anfal campaign. In Syria's neighbouring countries, we are building centres for treatment, support and counselling for Syrian victims of sexual violence.

Fourthly, monitoring and reporting on conflict-related sexual violence is central to all protection. Data collection is essential to our ability to prevent, protect and respond, and the precondition for any justice

and accountability mechanism at the national and international levels. In addition, casualty recording is crucial. Sex- and age-disaggregated casualty data can reveal the tactics and patterns of determination of the perpetrators that cause particular harm to women and girls. Women protection advisers therefore need to be deployed, and monitoring and reporting arrangements should be established in all relevant peacekeeping and special political missions. A good example is the mandating of women protection advisers in the Mission in the Central African Republic.

As in the past, Germany will maintain its strong support for UN-Women, UNICEF and all other relevant actors, including civil society organizations, to ensure that women and girls are protected in armed conflicts and can play a strong role in post-conflict societies.

Before closing, let me touch upon the conflict in Ukraine, where civilians — among them, many women and girls — are being killed on a daily basis in the heart of Europe. On 24 January, a horrific attack on residential areas occured in Mariupol, killing at least 30 civilians and injuring many more. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission confirmed that the rockets were launched from rebel-held territory. In his recent briefings to the Council, Under-Secretary-General Feltman expressed the view of the United Nations that the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas of Mariupol could constitute a war crime. How many more reminders does it take to make sure that all sides to that conflict push more vigorously for a peaceful solution?

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): I want to thank you, Sir, for hosting this important meeting and today's speakers for their briefings to the Security Council and, more importantly, for the work they do to protect civilians.

One of the founding fathers of this institution, President Franklin Roosevelt, envisioned a world committed to four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. As the United Nations prepares to celebrate its seventieth anniversary, this vision should guide our efforts, particularly when it comes to women. Far too many women, from Syria and the Sudan to the Central African Republic, are living without freedoms and in great danger. They are often intentionally targeted by extremist groups, caught in the crossfire between rival factions, and driven from their homes, where they face new threats such as being sold into slavery, raped or killed.

Extremist groups like the Taliban, Boko Haram, Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) deny women their most basic rights: the rights to get an education, to earn a living, to choose a marriage partner, and even to walk down the street unaccompanied. It is not just extremist groups subjugating women. In the most repressive nations, there is no sympathetic police force to investigate crimes against a woman, no honest judiciary to hear her case, no independent media to give voice to her plight, and no free and fair elections to give her hope.

Growing up in Iran, Reyhaneh Jabbari faced every one of these injustices. Reyhaneh was just 19 when she was arrested for killing a man whom she said was trying to drug and rape her. Reyhaneh was placed in solitary confinement, denied access to a lawyer and tortured mercilessly. There was no proper investigation, no due process and no fair trial. Reyhaneh became another victim of an unjust system. She was sentenced to death and hanged in Tehran.

Reyhaneh's story is a familiar one in the Middle East. Tyrants and extremists believe that by silencing women they can silence modernization and civilization. We must do everything in our power to oppose the extremists who want to drag us back to the Dark Ages. Every time they try to take away a woman's voice, we must give that woman a voice. We must be the voice of Arwa, a 15-year-old Yazidi girl who was captured and raped by ISIS fighters and whose sisters are still in the hands of the Islamic State. We must be the voice of Laila, a woman from Myanmar who was dragged through the streets and then beheaded in Saudi Arabia. And we must be the voice of Noora from Yemen, who was just 11 when she was forced to marry a much older man, who raped and abused her. Those women need our attention, and they need the attention of our Governments and the United Nations — not tomorrow, but today. We must send the message that we will no longer tolerate such barbaric crimes, not now or ever.

As a father who raised his daughter, Oren, in Israel, I can say that I cannot imagine raising my daughter in any other Middle Eastern country. Israel understands that, when women participate as equal partners in the decision-making process, society benefits as a whole. Gender equality is enshrined in our 1948 Declaration of Independence. Golda Meir was elected Prime

Minister more than 40 years ago. Israel was the third country in the world to elect a woman to its highest office. Today, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where women have presided over each of the three branches of Government. The opportunities and freedoms afforded to Israeli women transcend religion and ethnicity. An Arab woman living in Israel enjoys more rights and freedoms than a woman anywhere else in the Middle East. They are elected to our Parliament; they are leading physicians, respected academics, renowned lawyers, successful chief executive officers and esteemed scientists. They have not merely broken the glass ceiling; they have shattered it.

The protection of women is an issue that is close to my heart. I have a mother and a wife and a daughter and a sister, and I am expecting my first granddaughter to arrive in a few weeks. I want them all to live in a world where every nation and every person respects their intelligence and abilities. I want to live in a world where there is zero tolerance for the oppression and persecution of women. I want to live in a world where the perpetrators of violence against women are brought to justice. And I want to live in a world where women are afforded the dignity and respect they deserve. We are the ones who can create that world. President Franklin Roosevelt said, "We have always held to the hope, the belief, the conviction that there is a better life, a better world, beyond the horizon." I know that there is a better world beyond the horizon, and together we can make it a reality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland): I am pleased to speak today on behalf of the members of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict — Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Uruguay and my own country, Switzerland. The Group of Friends is grateful to the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate so as to ensure that the issues of the protection of civilians and women and peace and security remain high on the agenda.

I run the risk of echoing much of what has already been said by previous speakers, but certain messages cannot be repeated enough. The Group of Friends strongly condemns all violations of international humanitarian law, international human-rights law and refugee law committed against civilians, including women and girls. Those responsible for atrocities such as crimes involving rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence; killing and maiming; wilfully impeding relief supplies, in contravention of international humanitarian law; and mass forced displacement too often go unpunished. In that regard, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the policy paper on sexual and gender-based crimes issued in 2014 by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Recent trends point to an increase in the deliberate targeting of women and girls in conflict, in blatant disregard of international human-rights law. The abduction of girls, which has been mentioned, and the specific targeting of women by violent extremists are two striking examples. Attacks on schools and on health-care facilities and their personnel are particularly despicable. As has been said, we cannot tolerate impunity, and we must ensure that all the perpetrators of such atrocities are held accountable for their actions. In that respect, we underline the importance of strengthening inter-State cooperation and States' cooperation with international jurisdictions in fighting impunity.

Women and girls face a wide range of threats and human-rights violations and abuses in armed-conflict and post-conflict situations. More must be done to ensure that our response takes into account the full range of violations and the differences in the impact that they can have on women and girls. Certain groups of women and girls who are particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged, such as displaced persons, may be specifically targeted or find themselves at an increased risk of violence. Women and girls face a greater risk of forced displacement, enforced disappearance and disproportionate impacts as a result of the destruction of civilian infrastructure, particularly education and health-care facilities. The forced displacement of women and girls is often the result of inequality in citizenship rights and in their involvement in decision-making processes, of discriminatory land and property rights, of the gender-biased application of asylum laws, of obstacles to registering and accessing identity documents and of the breakdown of protection systems in conflict situations. In that connection, the Group notes the importance of ensuring that the United Nations reports sex-disaggregated data and casualty records, and of recognizing the different needs of women, men, girls and boys.

Women's participation in the formulation and implementation of responses to protection challenges

is essential, and humanitarian assistance must take into account gender-specific needs and reduce the risks faced by women and girls, including in the early phases of response. However, improving the protection of women and girls should also be done through their empowerment in society, not merely during conflicts and their aftermath. Indeed, the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls is often related to underlying inequalities, which must be addressed in any effort to end impunity with regard to sexual violence and other serious crimes, in order to provide victim-centred support and create mechanisms to ensure that women are empowered and supported through social, economic and political inclusion and opportunities. In that regard, we would like to recall here the importance of implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and other related resolutions.

The Group of Friends also stresses the importance of prevention and the need to prioritize the use of peaceful and diplomatic tools, including good offices and mediation, in the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict environments. In that regard, we have taken note of recent initiatives that emphasize the role of the United Nations in prevention, such as the recently released Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes and, of course, the Rights Up Front Action Plan.

In conclusion, we encourage the Security Council to strengthen the protection of civilians across its agenda, including in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Looking ahead, the parallel reviews in 2015 of the peacebuilding architecture of the United Nations, the women and peace and security agenda and peace operations will be an important opportunity to examine how we can reinforce the effectiveness and consistency of our common action in protecting civilians and ensure that it is gender sensitive and reflective of women's voices on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Ruiz (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate and for this morning's briefings by the representatives of the Secretariat, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society.

The relevance of today's debate is clear when we look at the news of humanitarian crises that dominate the international media. The numbers show that 2014 has the dishonourable distinction of having been the year that produced the greatest number of displaced persons and refugees globally since the Second World War, with approximately 51 million people having been pushed far from their homes, uprooted from their surroundings, stripped of everything and pushed to foreign lands, in which women, facing the sadness of having lost everything, represent, together with children, the greatest number of victims. That situation of course presents countless challenges at all levels, both to the emergency organizations and the response system of the United Nations and other agencies and to the capacity of the affected Governments to respond, in terms of both human and economic resources.

Furthermore, the factors that create situations of vulnerability for women and girls in situations of armed conflict are not the same as in the past, where risks derived from international conflicts or foreign interventions. In fact, the number of those types of conflicts has declined by about 80 per cent over the past 20 years. From an average of seven international conflicts each year, between 1946 and 1967, we have gone to less than one per year on average since the start of the millennium. It is for that reason that Member States and the Security Council must confront instances of such violence with measures that are adapted to the specific nature of the new perpetrators, who in many cases are groups that are outside the law, that show a total disregard for international norms and legislation and that, in any case, do not respond in the same way as States.

Colombia has experienced that at first hand. Having traversed for five decades the bloody path of the self-degradation of internal armed conflict, it became clear, in seeking solutions to such phenomena, that our focus should be comprehensive and that support for victims should be constant. Therefore, the political commitment of the Government of President Santos Calderón from the beginning, and even before the start of the peace talks in Havana, included prioritizing victims through the victims and land restitution law. In that broad legal framework, there began the development of public policies that prioritized Colombian women, children and adolescent victims of the conflict. Colombia has understood that need as a fundamental element for achieving sustainable and lasting peace. To that end, our country has been implementing policies throughout the national territory aimed at bringing the presence of State institutions where they have been lacking.

The establishment of security in all corners of the country was essential, accompanied by institutional strengthening and the establishment and implementation of multiple programmes with a gender focus to meet the specific needs of the women and children who were victims of the conflict. Concrete examples of that commitment at the highest level in our country are the national public policy for gender equality and our comprehensive plan to ensure that women can live free from violence, enacted in 2013, along with the public policy guidelines on risk prevention, protection and the guarantee of the rights of women victims of armed conflict.

However, those examples of the legislation that we have developed and the policies that we have implemented do not speak as tangibly to the impact on the people as their own stories, such as that of Cielo Fernández, a woman from a rural area on the Colombian Atlantic coast called Tierralta, where her husband, Óscar Darío Hurtado, was murdered by a paramilitary squad in 2007. The violence took the lives of a great many other people as well that year, and Cielo simply could not run away. Her daughter Ariana needed her. Cielo, for example, says "I do everything for my love of Ariana." "Everything" meant not leaving her land.

Cielo was linked to the national plan for assistance and comprehensive reparation to victims. She received compensation, which contributed to her acquiring decent housing, including support from the Victims United programme to finish her studies as an administrative assistant and get a better job. For her, reparation is not the money itself, but what can be recovered with it. I quote Cielo:

> "For example, it allowed me to dream of having a home and to study and get ahead, and through my example of overcoming challenges, to encourage my daughter to see that this is good. Before that, it was clear that nothing happened for the victims, and now the Government is present. People are not so helpless, and that allows one to see the world from another perspective."

To arrive at a consistent and comprehensive undertaking, such as that just mentioned, Colombia has developed and put in place tools to make it possible to find solutions to those kinds of problems and have an impact on cultural transformation, which is needed so as to change paradigms in which the use of force against women and girls is accepted. Only in that way will we be able to achieve success and reconciliation and create new opportunities to build a new peaceful country. All this has been confirmed by the most recent stage of the peace negotiations in Havana, which we hope will soon reach a conclusion.

In their various roles in times of crisis, women have demonstrated courage as drivers of the reconstruction of the social fabric and of forgiveness and reconciliation, and have played an important role in achieving economic and political inclusion. When one sees courageous women who have the unlimited and committed support of the Government, as in my country, the democracy existing in States is strengthened and it sends a clear signal that it is possible, in the darkest night, to find effective solutions.

Allow me to conclude by referring to the way in which my Government has managed to understand, after many attempts to achieve peace, that peace is also built by healing society, allowing ourselves to mourn after all the barbarity of more than five decades of conflict. To do that, the Government has been working in rural areas especially affected by such phenomena, seeking to help victims overcome the fear, mistrust and traumatic experiences that they have suffered as a result of the atrocities of the conflict, as well as to strengthen their capacity to demand their rights and their active participation in local democratic institutions, based on the conviction that it is necessary to transform society, disarm people's minds and heal the wounds of our national soul.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Buffin (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium fully associates itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, as well as with the statement delivered by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians.

We also thank the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for having convened this open debate today, and the various speakers for their contributions.

Current events once again make this debate even more relevant. The situation in Syria and Iraq continues to deteriorate, and every day children are the first to suffer the effects of conflict. In Nigeria, the cynicism of the Boko Haram terrorists seems to have no limits. After kidnapping several hundreds of young students, who are still being held, Boko Haram recently used young girls wearing suicide vests to commit attacks. In

those three countries in conflict, women and girls are being targeted by Boko Haram, in Nigeria, and by the psuedo Islamic State, in Iraq and Syria, precisely owing to their gender. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the horrific crimes that are being committed do not go unpunished. We need to help the States in question to prosecute the perpetrators of such acts and, on the basis of the principle of complementarity, to allow international justice to be administered, in particular by the International Criminal Court.

We can guarantee the protection of civilians in conflict only if we involve women more in the design of strategies, policies and specific missions for that purpose, as well as in their comprehensive implementation. We encourage the Security Council and the contingent-contributing countries to ensure greater involvement by women. Furthermore, beyond conflicts and the protection of the civilians affected, greater involvement by women in social life — whether through equal access to justice, education, the means to earn their subsistence, the right to vote or the effective right to have access to the highest political and economic offices — would facilitate the reduction of community, religious and social tensions. Every one of us must rise to meet that goal and that challenge.

For its part, in 2013, Belgium put in place its second national action plan on women and peace and security for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Consistent with the fundamental goals of the resolution, the plan sets up concrete policies that allow Belgium — at home or abroad, through participation in the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations — to better promote and protect the rights of women and increase their participation in the decision-making process.

Better protection of civilians in armed conflict requires better anticipation of the occurrence of conflicts. Similarly, in an armed conflict, every United Nations official should know exactly what his or her responsibilities and obligations are, as well as those of the Organization as a whole. Good internal and external coordination of United Nations action is also required for that purpose. Through the objectives designed to meet those needs, the Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative makes a significant contribution to the protection of civilians. The same can be said about the recommendation made by the Secretary-General in his 2013 report on the protection of civilians, which called for

> "work[ing] together to establish a common United Nations system to systematically record civilian casualties as part of broader efforts to monitor and report on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, drawing on good practice and expertise from within the United Nations, Member States and civil society." (*S/2013/689, para. 71*)

The fight against all forms of violence against women, especially sexual violence, and the condemnation thereof has been a foreign policy and development-cooperation priority in Belgium for nearly 20 years. Therefore, under the Belgian presidency of the Donor Support Group of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Red Crescent, Belgium has decided to work on that issue. The approach of the ICRC in that area is particularly interesting and worthy of note. As part of its action, the ICRC shifts the burden of proof of the existence of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence. Acts of sexual violence are now presumed to have taken place in such cases unless proven otherwise, which enables the ICRC programmes to mainstream that presumption in its response.

Belgium also wishes to emphasize the need to provide peacekeeping missions with clear mandates to protect civilians. The protection of civilians is one of the core missions of the United Nations. However, in a 2014 report, the Office of Internal Oversight Services highlighted the tendency in peacekeeping missions not to use force to defend civilians under attack, despite the fact that the use of force is legal and in accordance with the Security Council's intentions. One explanation for that state of affairs would be a lack of clarity in mandates. By contrast, resolution 2098 (2013), on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which creates a special Intervention Brigade and authorizes it to use force to protect civilians, shows that with a clear and specific mandate, a peacekeeping mission can truly ensure the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

The clarity of mandates is therefore fundamental but not sufficient. There must be three other elements in place — strong operational control of activities of the contingents, clarity among the troop contingents on the tactical approach, and a good working relationship between the peacekeeping operations and the humanitarian actors on the ground.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to reiterate the support of my country for France's initiative in

favour of a voluntary limitation on the use of the veto in cases of mass crimes and on the implementation of the concept of responsibility to protect. This year is the tenth anniversary of the official acceptance, during the United Nations World Summit, by all Member States of the responsibility of each State to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In that context, we welcome the launch by the Secretary-General of the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes. Like the rigorous application of principles of international humanitarian law at the heart of the legal obligation to protect civilians in armed conflict, the effective implementation of the responsibility to protect allows us to ensure that children, women and men do not fall prey to unnecessary suffering. Again, it is the responsibility of each of us, of each State, to ensure that that goal does not fall by the wayside.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mrs. Colín Ortega (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the briefers' statements and thanks the delegation of Chile for convening today's debate on an issue that presents a challenge to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Civilians remain the primary victims in situations of armed conflict largely because of the use of weapons in heavily populated areas. It is not only a question of collateral damage — civilians are increasingly becoming targets of groups or factions in conflict. It is estimated that over 80 per cent of the victims of armed conflict are civilians. And among them, the majority are women and girls displaced from their places of origin and subject to sexual violence and inhuman treatment. Mexico reaffirms its condemnation of any attack — deliberate or not — against civilian populations, whether or not it is part of a widespread pattern in armed conflict.

The effective protection of civilians requires respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as measures to guarantee compliance. Civilian populations should not be the object of the conflict, nor should they be used directly as part of a military tactic. International humanitarian law provides for special protection for women and girls in armed conflict, protection against sexual violence and protection for pregnant women as well as mothers and children, prisoners of war and women detained during armed conflict. It is our responsibility to ensure that such protection is provided.

Mexico reiterates its commitment to the United Kingdom initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict, which seeks to strengthen the response to such violence and to promote the efficacy of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, adopted in June 2014. We hope that that initiative will facilitate investigations that allow for the prosecution of those responsible and for the provision of care to victims.

The calls that the Security Council has made over the past 15 years in the area of women and peace and security provide an international perspective on the very transformation of armed conflicts and new threats to international peace and security. From the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) to the presidential statement adopted last October (S/PRST/2014/21), which calls on Member States to protect their populations, particularly women and girls affected by violent extremism, the Council, often criticized for inaction, has contributed significantly to highlighting the way in which our societies have lagged behind on gender issues and has shown the way towards putting the measures adopted to close the gap into practice. Facing new challenges in the agendas of the protection of civilians and women and peace and security requires prevention strategies that include the strengthening of economic and social rights and the promotion of opportunities to ensure the full participation and inclusion of women.

Mexico hopes that the review processes on peacekeeping operations, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the comprehensive study on the implementation of that resolution will serve to provide us with a road map for integrating our concerns on the protection of civilians and women, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Lastly, I wish to stress the central element of the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations, a theme that will also be discussed during the next session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. In that regard, my delegation calls on the Security Council to take into account the recommendations and policies that the Special Committee will produce with regard to setting up or renewing peacekeeping mandates. We also call on all other Member States to effectively participate in that debate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): I commend the presidency of Chile for convening this open debate on an issue that needs special attention and requires immediate measures on the part of the international community. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Chile for its very active and successful presidency of the Security Council. We also thank the briefers for sharing their insights on the issue before us, in particular the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

The need to uphold the rights of women and girls should be clearly specified in the mandates and operations of United Nations peacekeepers and country teams, host Governments, regional organizations and all other stakeholders, with the rules and responsibilities explicitly demarcated and effectively coordinated, including in cases requiring the use of force.

The make-up of peacekeeping operations, with political, military, human rights and humanitarian components and a gender focal point within a single United Nations mission, has recently demonstrated significant results. Given the widespread gender inequality in post-conflict countries, gender units in peacekeeping missions will require additional personnel, more funds and technical assistance to accomplish their tasks. In addition, the gender unit must lobby for a gender-sensitive outlook and public awareness among country leaders at all levels and at all phases of a conflict, and facilitate greater contacts for women with Government officials.

We envisage the following steps, among others: the recruitment of more women from civilian, military and police ranks in peacekeeping operations, including through increased engagement on the part of troop- and police-contributing countries; the further training of Department of Peacekeeping Operations gender teams; regular reviews of the policies that serve to guide and assist field missions aimed at better implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions; the broader representation of women from the outset and throughout all stages of the peace process; the conclusion of peace agreements that are be compatible with international standards and instruments with regard to women's rights; support to women, including victims, and the training of women aimed at promoting their participation in political and social life in their countries, including in electoral processes, both as candidates and voters; and special attention to women in conflict zones affected by climate change.

My country, Kazakhstan, accords the utmost importance to the security of women and girls during conflicts and in post-conflict phases, as is evident in its engagement in the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Western Sahara and Côte d'Ivoire. Likewise, civilian protection has been a priority for my country. We have supported Governments in the region and beyond with humanitarian assistance, and we have and contributed significantly to regional peace and security.

My country is among the 27 member States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to have developed a national action plan on women and peace and security, which focuses on early warning and actions, dialogue, facilitation, mediation support and post-conflict resolution. Key international instruments related to women and peace and security are also reflected in our national legislation relating to gender equality and freedom from gender-based violence.

Kazakhstan, which is bidding for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term, has assigned high priority to its commitment to protecting women and girls, and pledges to be a strong voice on their behalf.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Bamrungphong (Thailand): At the outset, Thailand wishes to commend Chile for organizing this important debate and for the comprehensive concept note outlining key elements for the discussion today (S/2015/32, annex). My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to the briefers for their useful information and insights.

Thailand aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network.

The stakes are high at today's debate because we continue to witness civilians, particularly women and girls, bearing the brunt of armed conflicts and of post-conflict settings. They still fall victims to deliberate and indiscriminate attacks, sexual exploitation and abuse, brutal violence and systematic human-rights violations. The protection of civilians, particularly women and girls, is multidimensional and needs a holistic approach

in order to address the whole spectrum of issues. Please allow me to address some key points in that respect.

A universal guiding principle states that the protection of civilians is the primary responsibility of the host Government. However, the effective protection of civilians requires the collective efforts of all parties concerned. All parties to a conflict must honour and strictly comply with their obligations under international laws, international humanitarian law and human-rights law. Those who breach those laws and violate human rights must be held accountable. The protection of civilians is one of the core mandates of the Council. When civilians are at risk, the Security Council must act decisively and in a timely manner, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Thailand supports the Council's authorization of the 10 peacekeeping missions with protection mandates.

We are also pleased to learn that the United Nations attaches importance to the development of an overarching strategy on the protection of civilians and an action plan for 2015-2016 that encompasses activities across the entire spectrum of the protection of civilians. Thailand stands ready to cooperate with the United Nations for the success of that important undertaking. However, Thailand emphasizes the need to ensure that the resources and capacities allocated to those missions match their mandates and activities.

Let me turn to another important aspect of the protection of women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. Thailand attaches importance to increasing the number of female peacekeepers and to the proportion of women holding senior positions in United Nations field missions, as reflected in the Secretary-General report on women and peace and security (S/2014/693). Those goals need to be achieved. We also support the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations and the provision of training on gender sensitivity before deployment in order to better address the specific needs of women and girls in a conflict environment. Thailand envisages contributing more female peacekeepers and gender experts to the Security Council's roster of experts in the very near future. At the same time, we must fully enforce the zero-tolerance policy in order to ensure that women and girls are not sexually abused or exploited by their protectors under their protection mandates.

Thailand is an advocate of the women and peace and security agenda. We cannot emphasize enough the significance of the role and participation of women in peace processes. We strongly believe that women and girls are not, and must not be, victims. They are, in fact, agents of change and agents of peace. Against that backdrop, Thailand, in partnership with the International Peace Institute, will conduct a series of events focusing on women's participation in peace processes and peacekeeping operations. It is our fervent hope that the findings, analyses and recommendations from that project will greatly contribute to the Security Council's high-level review on women and peace and security.

In conclusion, we must not fail to protect civilians. The international community has to do its utmost. Thailand is committed in that regard: it will continue to work closely with the United Nations and the international community on that task, which allows no compromise.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mrs. Gatto (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (EU) and with the statement delivered by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, and wishes to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

In these times, civilians have become victims of senseless violence in an increasing number of conflicts all over the world. Neither women, girls, children nor other vulnerable groups have been spared in this most urgent crisis, which the Security Council has been discussing over the past year. All of the gender-based forms of human-rights violations and abuses experienced by women and girls, such as killings, sexual violence, forced marriages, attacks on schoolgirls and restricted access to education and health facilities, need to be addressed by the Council urgently and resolutely.

This is not a matter of applying normative tools — not any more. In fact, since its adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the Security Council has recognized women's vulnerability in armed conflict, as well as the vital importance of increasing women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, including peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Moreover, in accordance with resolution 2122 (2013), the Council has committed itself to promoting gender equality

and the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations. In addition, the operationalization of the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism has been established and further developed in recent years. However, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's latest report on women and peace and security (S/2014/693) and the 2014 International Criminal Court Prosecutor's policy paper on sexual and gender-based crimes, the global landscape for women's and girls' rights in armed conflict and post-conflict settings remains dire. That is why it is time to take common action, led by the strongest possible political will of the Council.

In that respect, Italy underlines the importance of strengthening cooperation among Member States and with international jurisdictions in order to fight impunity. The effective protection of civilians depends on a culture of accountability in all conflict scenarios. Even States that are not parties to the International Criminal Court nor a party to the Rome Statute can cooperate with the Court and contribute to the discharge of its mandate, thereby assisting in reaching a fundamental goal of the international community as a whole.

In strengthening the protection of civilians, women and girls in particular, we must ensure that the perpetrators of crimes realize that the Security Council will effectively follow through in enforcing individual responsibility for crimes under international law.

Prevention and the response to gender-based violence were a priority during our recently concluded presidency of the Council of the European Union, in line with our long-term commitment to that issue. The Italian Government has implemented specific programmes targeting women and girls and the survivors of violence in Africa, Asia and the Middle East that aim to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development assistance. Consistent with our work on the ground, we have made the issue a priority in the EU humanitarian affairs working group in Brussels, and we organized the European Union round table on gender-based violence in emergencies, which called for renewed action at all levels.

Prevention is key. Let me conclude by stressing the importance of disseminating early-warning mechanisms to prevent gender crimes in conflict-related situations. To counter the scourge of violence against women and girls, due priority should be given to the peacekeeper policy units that are providing training in the protection of women's rights, as well as to strengthening United Nations monitoring and assessment capabilities. To that end, Italy warmly welcomes the launch of the Human Rights Up Front initiative by the Secretary-General some months ago, and the recent adoption of analytical tools for preventing such heinous acts, such as the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Vencel (Slovakia): Slovakia thanks the presidency of Chile for initiating this important open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We think that it is important that this issue remain under the periodic consideration and review of the Security Council and all United Nations agencies.

Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. In addition I would like to raise a few points that we consider important when addressing this topic, namely, the significance of adapting to the new emerging threats, accountability and the contribution of security-sector reform.

First of all, we share the concern of the Secretary-General that, despite the progress achieved with respect to increased resources, structures and more robust and complex mandates for peacekeeping missions, we are still seeing inconsistent results with regard to the effective protection of civilians in challenging conflict environments. In fact, we are seeing a continued rise in the number of civilians who are victims of armed conflicts. Part of the challenge is that new and emerging conflicts are themselves becoming more complex, and our traditional responses and approaches are therefore becoming less effective.

In that regard, we can see from the recent conflicts involving Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region, as well as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Iraq and Syria, that the new security challenges are increasingly transnational in nature, yet our strategies for the protection of civilians still remain constrained by traditional national approaches. We need to continue to adapt and strengthen our tools and approaches to deal with such new emerging threats, and to become more proactive in identifying them. We also need to ensure our ability to respond quickly and effectively, as well as to develop more coherent and coordinated approaches to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Although it is the primary responsibility of each State to protect its own citizens, we must admit that host States quite often fail to fulfil their obligations, owing either to a lack of resources or, unfortunately, to a lack of political will. In that regard, we urge the Security Council to be mindful of all violations of international humanitarian law and to make sure that all of the relevant resolutions dealing with the protection of civilians are fully implemented. Most important, we need to promote the continued development of both international and national accountability mechanisms that could better deter such violence against civilians, end impunity and ensure that all victims have effective and timely access to justice. That also includes more consistent application of the United Nations due-diligence policy, so that we can ensure that we develop the proper vetting mechanisms for the partners and actors whom we support and so we do not end up reinforcing actors who are responsible for violations of human rights and violence against civilians.

Over the past decade, the United Nations has made significant progress in enhancing its capacities to provide protection to civilians whose lives are in danger, as the Council has shifted peacekeeping well beyond its traditional role of monitoring the implementation of peace agreements. Today's peacekeeping missions are multidimensional and are more often mandated to play an active role in the physical protection of civilians. Although that United Nations function is critical in the early phases of United Nations interventions, we need to ensure, in parallel, that we build more sustainable and durable preventive measures in the longer term. In that regard, we need to develop more effective approaches to building State institutions, which will gradually decrease dependence on international support aimed at ensuring basic protection for civilians. Going forward, in order to ensure that national security institutions become more responsive, effective and proactive in protecting civilians, we must ensure that we build efficient, professional, responsive and accountable State institutions through a national security-sector reform process.

Slovakia strongly supports the full implementation of resolution 2151 (2014), on security-sector reform. We have to revisit the effectiveness of the security-sector reform processes that we are supporting and gauge whether we are in fact applying good practice in the area of security-sector reform.

First, the foundation of any security-sector reform process should be an inclusive approach and local ownership. Too often, we see that the most vulnerable groups, which are also the most susceptible to violence, and the most affected by insecurity are also marginalized in the process of shaping, managing and overseeing security-sector reform. Representative and inclusive security institutions in which there is balanced staffing at the operational level, but also in management and in oversight capacities, should be promoted. That should include full consideration for strengthening the involvement of women in all aspects of the security-sector reform process, especially in management and oversight capacities.

Secondly, we cannot simply focus on training and equipping activities, but we must also focus on building effective oversight, management and accountability mechanisms. We are seeing, in places such as Iraq, Libya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the international community has provided substantial support to building the capacity of State or even non-State institutions, that such capacity has been used to harm the civilian populations because there is no system of accountability or oversight in place to deter such institutions from abusing their power. Similarly, better trained and equipped military or police services have also sometimes proven to be ineffective, or without any noticeable impact on security, simply because the growth in capacity is not matched by a similar ability to manage and direct that capacity.

Thirdly, we need to review the skills and training that are to be expected from security personnel. In that regard, in addition to basic training, we need to ensure that we sensitize all security personnel, both national actors whom we help to train and peacekeepers whom we deploy, on the key concepts of human security. Such training also needs to integrate and mainstream the issues of human rights, child protection and gender.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance of ending impunity for violations of applicable international humanitarian law and human rights law as part of a comprehensive approach to seeking sustainable peace, truth and national reconciliation. We believe that ending impunity is also an instrumental part of preventing future violations. In that regard, we would like to stress the need for a comprehensive, independent and impartial investigation of all abuses and massive attacks against civilians and the indiscriminate destruction of civilian infrastructure, in

accordance with internationally recognized standards and procedures.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Sajdik (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional network composed of Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer and my own country, Austria. The Human Security Network is an informal group of States that advocates for greater use of the human-security approach in policies and programmes at the international, regional and national levels.

Let me first of all thank Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang, Director Durham and Ms. Elman for their comprehensive statements. On behalf of the members of the Network, I would also like to thank the presidency of Chile for convening this open debate, which focuses for the first time on the protection of women and children and the challenges and needs that they face.

The Network was created in the context of the Ottawa Convention, which bans landmines, and the protection of civilians in conflict has always been central to our concerns. We cannot overemphasize the importance of discussions such as today's on how best to ensure the security, protection and dignity of civilians affected by armed conflict.

This year, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will celebrate its twentieth anniversary, and 15 years will have passed since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. Those documents recognized for the first time the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and in particular the important role of women as active agents of change in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in all phases of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Moreover, in view of this year's review of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, it is particularly timely to focus on the protection of civilians, especially the challenges faced by women and girls.

Despite the unrelenting efforts of the international community, civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in armed conflicts, which have a huge impact on women and girls. Grave abuses and violence against women and girls, including sexual violence and rape, continue to be a common occurrence in conflict and post-conflict settings all around the world. We unequivocally condemn sexual and gender-based violence, and we are determined to address and fight those heinous crimes.

Likewise, the Network remains particularly concerned by the difficulties in taking action to ensure the protection of civilians, including women and girls. Preventive measures and early warning and monitoring mechanisms to counter violence against women and girls must be strengthened. States themselves bear the duty to protect civilians and to ensure and respect their rights.

We stress the importance of fighting impunity and ensuring accountability under national or international jurisdictions. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice. Commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions are useful tools for substantiating alleged violations, thus opening the way for successful prosecution and conviction. When States are unwilling or unable to bring perpetrators to justice, a referral to the International Criminal Court is a complementary means for preventing impunity and restoring dignity and hope to the survivors of atrocities, their families and communities.

Moreover, parties to armed conflicts must allow the rapid and unimpeded access of humanitarian relief for civilians in need. The effective protection of civilians requires that humanitarian assistance, especially in terms of medical personnel and relief, is respected, protected from attacks and enjoys freedom of movement. That is essential to the exercise of humanitarian personnel's functions.

The economic, political and social empowerment of women and girls reduces their vulnerability and enhances their ability to protect themselves and exercise their rights. In that regard, we need to ensure that women and girls' interests are fully respected and systematically integrated into the framework of peace processes. We need to increase the number of women in peace talks, peacekeeping missions and in senior positions at the United Nations, as well as in other international, regional and subregional organizations. In order to achieve this, further investments in female skills development are necessary and measures to promote women have to be taken. That includes changing mindsets. Ultimately, the media should avoid labelling women as victims of armed conflicts. Rather, the perception of women and girls as positive agents

of change who play diverse roles in building, securing and maintaining peace must be reinforced. In that regard, the stories of women who have contributed to the resolution of conflicts and peace agreements must be told and heard in order to dispel such stereotypes.

Please allow me now to add some observations in my national capacity.

Austria has been a strong supporter of the Council's increased attention to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, based on the conviction that all parties must comply with international human rights as well as humanitarian and refugee law. Since the adoption of resolution 1894 (2009) under Austria's presidency of the Security Council in 2009, considerable progress has been made. Austria has developed an interdisciplinary training course on the protection of civilians that is open to national and international participants. The course recently received a certificate from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and is now recognized as a centre of excellence for training in the protection of civilians.

Explosive weapons are a sphere of particular concern to Austria. We commend the Secretariat's efforts, including the expert seminars organized by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs over the last two years in London and Oslo to raise awareness about the devastating humanitarian consequences of explosive weapons for civilians, including for women, and to restrict their use in populated areas, where they cause indiscriminate harm. Austria will itself host an expert meeting in Vienna in September.

We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as well as the Secretariat's efforts to develop practical measures and guidance to reduce their humanitarian impact. Austria hosted an international symposium on women and peace and security at the beginning of November 2014 in Vienna. By focusing on neglected aspects, such as the issue of gender-sensitive conflict analysis or the role of the media, we intended to provide useful input to the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We hope that the ongoing reviews of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the 2015 high-level review and global study on women and peace and security will provide evidence of what can be achieved by effectively integrating a gender perspective in conflict prevention and management.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal.

Mr. Cisse (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to commend Chile for holding this debate. I also wish to commend the President for his outstanding leadership of the work of the Security Council, which follows in the wake of the recent laudable Chadian presidency last month.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa took the Chair.

This important debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict is taking place 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the holding of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as on the threshold of the adoption of a new generation of development goals. Those events remind the international community of its responsibility for women's empowerment, which has been hindered by the many acute crises of which they are unfortunately the biggest victims.

Today's meeting gives us an opportunity to closely look at the progress made as well as at the challenges that remain, especially in the light of the developments set out in the recent report of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (S/2014/693), which supports the briefings of Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Helen Durham of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Ms. Ilwad Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. We express our heartfelt thanks for their briefings.

Armed conflicts, in so far as they encourage violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, such as sexual and gender-based violence, undermine the foundations of peace and obliterate development efforts. In that regard, the delegation of Senegal is pleased at the strengthening of the normative framework that followed the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which is evidence of the interest attached to the protection and leadership of women in armed conflicts.

We take note in that regard, besides resolutions 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013), of the adoption of two important texts — the declaration of commitment to eliminate sexual violence adopted by 150 States, including Senegal, on the sidelines of work of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, as well

as the statement of the Peacebuilding Commission on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding.

Likewise, it is appropriate to welcome both the increase in the number of peacekeeping operations with a mandate to protect civilians, including those currently deployed in Mali and Central Africa, and the inclusion, in 2013, of the issue of women and peace and security in a significant number of agreements and resolutions, including those creating or extending the mandate of a peacekeeping mission. In addition, the participation of women took place in all official peace mediations undertaken by the United Nations in 2013, while their corresponding participation stood at 86 per cent in 2011. Despite those very encouraging statistics, women and girls continue to be mistreated in different theatres of conflicts or as displaced persons, as numerous cases of rape attest to, as well as exploitation, sexual slavery, pregnancies, forced abortions and prostitution, attacks against schools or, still yet, threats against families.

This serious state of affairs is unworthy of a world that makes the protection of civilians one of its priority concerns. That is why it is urgent to increase our efforts to protect women and girls in these moments of tragedy and horror fuelled by an uncontrolled circulation of weapons. It therefore seems important to us — continuing in the footsteps of resolution 1894 (2009) and taking the opportunity afforded us by the review of peacekeeping operations — to make the protection of civilians a priority when defining the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We also need to ensure that peacekeeping troops that are to be deployed in a conflict receive heightened training in the protection of civilians, as well as be provided with holistic protection strategies.

Beyond the prevention of sexual violence, there is an urgent need to impose targeted sanctions and to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of these acts, which international criminal law has qualified as crimes against the humanity and as genocide.

I should also like to welcome here the tireless efforts of Ms. Zeinab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to bring parties to conflict to assume their share of responsibility in the protection of women, particularly in the context of the United Nations campaign relating thereto.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the interest that Senegal has as a troop-contributing country in the issue of women and peace and security, especially during this decisive year, which will bring the question of women to the top of the world's priorities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Monsignor Urbańczyk (Holy See): My delegation wishes to congratulate Chile on its presidency of the Security Council and for convening this important debate. Today's discussion provides a much-needed opportunity to focus on the impact of violence on women and girls in conflict settings and to identify the initiatives that must be undertaken to eradicate this scourge that continues to escalate.

The Holy See firmly opposes recourse to armed conflict as a means of solving disputes and recognizes that women and girls suffer disproportionately from the ravages of conflict. In conflict settings women and girls are more vulnerable as a result of inequality and are directly targeted as part of fear tactics and deliberate assaults on their rights.

The belief in the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of the principles of Catholic social teaching. All persons, women and men, girls and boys, by virtue of their human dignity are free and equal. Violence in all its forms is an affront to human dignity and, moreover, sexual violence against women tears at the very fabric of society.

That was pointed out by His Holiness Pope Francis when he emphasized that we must not overlook the fact that wars involve another horrendous crime, the crime of rape. That is a most grave offence against the dignity of women, who are not only violated in body but also in spirit, resulting in a trauma hard to erase and with effects on society as well. Sadly, even apart from situations of war, even today all too many women are victims of violence.

My delegation remains concerned about the continued lack of attention and priority to the protection of women and girls who are targeted and attacked purely because of the faith they profess. The lack of focus and priority for protecting them is troubling when Christians face extinction in some regions of the world and in other regions Christian schools for girls are targeted and attacked. That is a shared reality of members of all faiths, and therefore requires the shared commitment of members of all faiths and Governments strongly to condemn and confront such violence.

The Catholic Church, through its institutions and agencies throughout the world, is providing assistance, care and support to thousands of survivors of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Those institutions and their courageous individuals sacrifice themselves on a daily basis, and many of them have paid dearly for their endeavours. Because of that permanent local presence in the world's most disaster-prone areas, this network of Catholic institutions and agencies responds rapidly and effectively to address the consequences of violence in armed conflict.

In conclusion, as Pope Francis recently noted in his address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, we must reject the culture of enslavement, which is incapable of doing good or pursuing peace and accepts as inevitable the spread of war and violence. We must redouble our efforts to replace this culture with a culture of life and peace in which Governments and the international community fulfil their fundamental responsibility to protect all people.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Rivas (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to commend the President for organizing this debate and for his excellent concept note (S/2014/32, annex), as well as to express our gratitude to all those, especially women, who work on a daily basis to promote peace and security and to protect civilians. I should also like to thank those who delivered briefings at the beginning of this meeting.

Uruguay associates itself with the statement made by the representative Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

I must begin by thanking the President for allowing us to address in this open debate a topic that is so important. Uruguay is strongly committed to the agenda for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts and acknowledges its inherent link to the agenda of women and peace and security and children in armed conflict. These are part of the priorities of our foreign policy.

Unfortunately, in spite of the legal and normative strides forward recorded in the past few years, we as a troop-contributing country can testify to the fact that civilians, in particular children, women and girls, continue to be the main victims in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict situations. They also account for the greatest number of victims, as is witnessed by the sad situation in Syria and in what recently occurred in the Gaza Strip. In particular, we observe with deep concern the violence against specific population groups and against the human rights of women and children by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and others.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war for terror and revenge in order to obtain the subjugation or support of entire communities, or to cause humiliation or used to destroy the culture of a group or community that is considered an enemy, is clearly a constant feature of a certain type of armed conflict. That is why it is essential to create the conditions that provide an opportunity for women who have been expelled to be reintegrated into their communities and to be able to bring up the children that are the products of rape without any impediments. The horrors witnessed by girls and boys against their mothers and sisters will continue to affect them throughout their lives, almost certainly to be manifested in a brutal way sooner or later unless they are adequately addressed. It is therefore necessary that we halt the cycle of violence wherein the immediate consequences of violence often become causes that generate more violence in the next generation.

My country attaches particular importance to the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Uruguay has approximately 1,000 soldiers who fulfil many tasks for the protection of civilians, joint protection and vigilance teams are operating in order to monitor violations and to ensure the protection of human rights in remote areas. In that regard, we are aware of the fact that it is essential to identify emerging signals from the field, as well as to send appropriate early signals to the stakeholders concerned as to the obligation to respect the moral and physical integrity of people. That is why it is also crucial to strengthen the role of communities in ensuring their own protection, not only for immediate physical protection but also for preventing, alerting and acting against attempts at aggression, as well as for establishing cultural criteria at the level of the family and the community that ensures that the rights of women and girls are respected.

In line with that goal, Uruguay has undertaken various timely initiatives to seek to create spaces for integration in various communities, such as in Pinga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Uruguayan personnel established a football school where both boys and girls of different ethnic groups who found

themselves in areas of armed conflict could share activities together that allowed them to overcome differences and barriers and thereby contribute to building a peaceful environment.

Refugees, asylum seekers, the repatriated, stateless persons and persons displaced during conflict face enormous vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. The Government of Uruguay has sought to provide a humanitarian response in the face of the refugee crisis in Syria, having committed to receive 120 Syrian refugees. To date, five families have arrived in our country, including 33 boys and girls.

The obvious mutual connection between participation and protection is a concept that is central to resolution 1325 (2000). In the resolution, the Council reiterates the important role played by women in preventing and resolving conflicts and in peacebuilding. The number of women deployed in Uruguayan contingents to peacekeeping operations demonstrates our commitment in that regard.

Promoting accountability is another fundamental element to prevent the most serious violations of human rights, in particular of women and girls. It is also important to support concrete activities to combat impunity, including designating experts to investigate sexual and gender-based violence. By the same token, special attention should be focused on the need faithfully to comply with the code of conduct by all those who are members of United Nations peacekeeping contingents deployed on the ground, based on the zero-tolerance policy.

In conclusion, in the course of its upcoming substantive session, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations will hold negotiations on the issue of the protection of civilians, which I believe will be an opportunity for all of us to work constructively in order to strengthen our commitment to this noble goal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Grant (Canada): Civilians suffer disproportionately in times of war and conflict, and Canada condemns the appalling rise in acts specifically targeting women and children that have become such a grim feature of many of today's armed conflicts.

Mr. Barros Melet took the Chair.

There is an urgent need for the Security Council and for all Member States to address the crises in Iraq and Syria, in Nigeria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere that are brutalizing civilians and tragically targeting the most vulnerable: women and girls. It is imperative that both State and non-State armed groups fully respect their obligations under international law, and that violators be held accountable.

Canada has strongly condemned the campaign of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) of sexual violence, which has included staggering levels of forced marriage, abduction, trafficking, torturing, raping and killing of women and children. We have also spoken out in the strongest terms against the terrorist group Boko Haram's vile crimes against civilian populations. These have included the calculated targeting of schoolchildren, the kidnapping, rape and forced marriage of young women and girls, and the forced recruitment of young girls to carry out suicide bomb attacks.

(*spoke in French*)

It is clear that the rise of violent extremism in these and other instances has had a particularly grave impact on the rights and well-being of women and children. We remain concerned that humanitarian agencies have been facing increasing challenges in gaining access to civilians affected by armed conflict. In times of armed conflict and displacement, the protection needs of the most vulnerable, including women and children, too often go unmet.

Canada fully supports the women and peace and security agenda. Women's empowerment and the protection of their rights not only enhances their ability to protect themselves, it affects the fate of entire communities, as women are undeniably agents of resilience and positive change. We must strengthen the quality of casualty tracking and the collection of disaggregated data. We must get better at ensuring that the work of the international community reflects what our gender analyses and data collection tells us. Furthermore, we must ensure that the priorities and recommendations of the United Nations consistently reflect the specific needs of women and girls.

It is for those reasons that Canada supports the United Nations Human Rights Up Front initiative. The use of the Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes serves as an important early-warning system that supports human rights by providing valuable guidance on implementing specific prevention measures.

(*spoke in English*)

We believe that efforts to address protection challenges in armed conflict and post-conflict settings will be incomplete, even impossible, without the full participation and empowerment of women and girls. This year alone, we have tremendous opportunities in which we must incorporate a rigorous focus on the protection of women and girls in ongoing initiatives, including the high-level reviews on women and peace and security and on peace operations and the post-2015 development agenda.

Equality between men and women, the empowerment of women and girls, respect for, and the promotion of, their dignity and human rights, and the prevention of, and response to, sexual violence are fundamental Canadian values. That is why Canada is so committed to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, ending child, early and forced marriage, and the promotion of maternal, newborn and child health.

We must all do more. We urge the Security Council and fellow Member States to incorporate the empowerment of women and girls into all of their work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank the President personally, and his country of Chile, for having organized this very interesting open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Allow me also to thank those who have spoken before me for the quality of their statements, which shed light on the ongoing challenges despite the progress made since 1999.

Civilians have always been the main victims of conflicts. In most contemporary conflicts, protagonists regularly flout the various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as the reports of the Secretary-General and other studies that explicitly recommend that warring parties should spare civilians. They also violate the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977 and all international treaties on the subject.

Today the responsibility to protect, which was launched at the 2005 World Summit of Heads of State, compels States to protect civilian populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass killings and other cruel and inhumane treatment. If a State fails to do so, then the international community must take its place. Obviously, any intervention of that kind must take place in strict respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Since the nineteenth century, as I mentioned previously, many conventions and resolutions recommend the protection of civilian populations in times of conflict. But it must be noted that civilians are still being massacred, mutilated, raped or deprived of humanitarian assistance by various parties to conflicts, all of this with disregard for the rules and conventions.

Among those attacking civilian populations there are first the fighters of negative forces in several regions of the world, especially those striking in our region of the Great Lakes of Africa. They terrorize the civilian populations to force them to provide unconditional support. They thus blatantly violate the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions which, in article 13 prohibits acts or threats of violence with the main objective of terrorizing the civilian population. Then there are the illegal actors, especially armed gangs and organized crime, which also sow terror in civilian populations by seizing goods and property and/or by practising various kinds of trafficking. In this category it is difficult to distinguish among those involved in conflict, which are a mixed bag of evil-doers, including fighters, traffickers, mercenaries and even the general population in some areas.

All civilians need protection against deliberate acts of abuse and violence. We must act collectively to defend the rights of vulnerable religious communities, which are persecuted in situations of armed conflict because of their religious convictions.

Women and girls throughout the world continue to fall victim to sexual violence in armed conflicts. That is why we must continue to work to prevent sexual violence, especially rape as a weapon of war and sexual slavery. In that connection, I am of course thinking in particular of the young Nigerian girls kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorist sect, a heinous act that we firmly condemn.

Attacks against civilians are unacceptable wherever they are committed. We denounce the strategies of using populations as human shields or weapons of war, as well as the threat created by mines and other explosive devices, which lead to heightened civilian casualties and a broader displacement of populations.

We see a bitter result, even a very bitter one. The situation of civilians is deteriorating in many areas of conflict. In Africa the situations in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Mali, in the Central African Republic, in Somalia, in South Sudan in areas where the Lord's Resistance Army has been striking, and in Côte d'Ivoire during the latest post-electoral crisis in 2011, have all revealed the degree of violence and atrocities to which combatants subject populations. Those who are most vulnerable — women, children, older people and handicapped people — pay the price of this senseless violence.

We stress that the protection of civilians in armed conflicts should not be a simple concern for the international community. To that end, we call on the Security Council to commit itself further, both at the political and the legal levels, to put an end to these atrocities, especially by applying targeted sanctions — that are non-discriminatory — against the authors of these acts of violence against civilians, in order to put an end to impunity.

We recall that the prevention of conflicts is the best way to protect civilian populations from armed violence. Preventive diplomacy should therefore play a leading role, as it has several advantages. Not only does it make it possible to save human lives, but it is also less expensive when it comes to those paying dues as Members of the United Nations.

It is true that the Security Council has seen some progress in terms of efforts to reduce the effects of conflicts on civilians, especially with the establishment of peacekeeping missions with mandates containing provisions and strategies to protect civilians. However, it is essential to recall that efforts to protect civilians must be inclusive. We must also ensure that such efforts are not used towards adverse ends, by avoiding as far as possible the use of selective focuses or double standards to the detriment of some civilian populations in distress in some highly politicized conflict areas.

We would point out that any use of force to defend civilians must take place with total respect for the Charter of the United Nations. Any unilateral action taken in the name of any kind of theory of protection of civilians with disregard for the Charter of the United Nations should be discouraged.

Burundi highlights the need for a reaction by the international community that is always proportionate to the situation to which we are responding on the ground when it comes to protecting civilians. For example, the protection of civilians should not be an excuse for regime change, and no body of the United Nations should serve as a tool for such a change. That, as is very well known, is a prerogative for the people of the country concerned.

My delegation would like to make some brief proposals with regard to our common efforts to protect civilians during armed conflicts.

First, parties to a conflict must respect international humanitarian law and human rights law. Any violation of those rights calls for the attention and action of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

Secondly, there is an urgent need for more frequent interactions with non-State groups to ensure that they respect standards for the protection of civilians. However, that does not mean that these groups are being recognized. It simply means that those groups must be made aware of the need to respect international humanitarian law, without, however, legitimizing their position.

Thirdly, peacekeeping missions mandated to protect civilians must be able to call on the resources and the necessary forces to carry out their tasks. And we must heighten the percentage of representation of women in all peacekeeping operations and special political missions after conflicts.

Fourthly, we must work much harder to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to ensure the survival of populations that are trapped in conflicts, because those who do not die from gunfire can certainly die of hunger in areas that are made inaccessible because of fighting.

Fifthly, and lastly, when national authorities do not protect their own civilians nor take the necessary measures to bring those who commit war crimes and violate human rights to justice, the Security Council must exercise leadership for a response at the international level, while respecting the standards of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Minami (Japan): At the outset, I should like to express my appreciation for the holding of this open debate.

Japan concurs and associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. I should like to focus on the aspect of women's empowerment under conflict and post-conflict settings.

Everyone caught living under the conditions of armed conflict suffers, but that suffering is spread unevenly. The fact is, in general, that women and girls suffer significantly more. They suffer more because women and girls are too often targeted directly as pawns in some of the more insidious tactics of war. They suffer more because they are more susceptible to rape, forced marriage, forced prostitution and other sexual and gender-based violence. Therefore, there are inherent needs and challenges to the protection of women and girls that require special consideration in the process of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. That is precisely why women must participate in decision-making in such processes.

In that regard, it is absolutely crucial to implement resolution 1325 (2000). As we explained in the open debate of the Security Council on women and peace and security in October (see S/PV.7289), the Government of Japan and Japanese civil society have been working together earnestly to develop our national action plan on women and peace and security. It is expected that we will be able to launch our plan very soon.

I should like to emphasize the aspect of women as active agents in society, especially in post-conflict settings, rather than women as objects of protection. Too often women are seen simply as vulnerable beings who are passively dependent upon the protection of others. However, the fact is that women play many positive and active roles in society, and their contributions are absolutely indispensable. It is often the very structure of society, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings, that hinders women's capability to flourish. However, under suitable conditions women can shine.

Policy implementation with sufficient budgeting is crucial for removing obstacles that hinder women from flourishing. Two years ago before the General Assembly (see A/68/PV.12), the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe, pledged the implementation of official development assistance (ODA) in excess of $3 billion over the three years from 2013 to 2015, towards women's empowerment and gender equality. We have already implemented approximately $1.8 billion of that pledge. Let me mention some of the projects implemented through that assistance.

In November 2014, Japan began contributing to a project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in cooperation with NATO and the Government of Turkey, that is training approximately 200 female Afghan police officers at the Sivas Police Training Centre in Turkey. As part of that project, in December of last year the Japan International Cooperation Agency sent three experts to hold a three-day workshop on empowering those officers to improve their ability to tackle gender-based violence.

Japan has been assisting female internally displaced persons and refugees from the Syrian conflict, mainly in Jordan, in achieving economic self-reliance through a project implemented by UN-Women in response to that crisis. We employ the cash-for-work method, which involves hiring internally displaced and refugee women for reconstruction projects in order to foster economic recovery and self-reliance. The project has already provided short-term employment for 950 female refugees, and will further provide skills-training to 300 women towards their greater economic self-reliance.

In conclusion, both the special needs and the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict settings are the two main pillars in the field of women and peace and security. In order to address this issue more effectively, I believe that the implementation of policy should be guided by the principle of human security, which focuses on the well-being of every individual and seeks to build societies in which everyone can live with dignity by protecting and empowering individuals and communities. Japan implements its ODA projects in the spirit of human security, and I believe that this approach will help us a lot.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): Allow me to begin by expressing our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on an important issue, as well as to thank the briefers for their presentations.

Indonesia wishes to reaffirm its support for resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and for the subsequent follow-up resolutions. We fully support the inclusion of a gender perspective within the protection-of-civilians agenda.

Over the past decade, there has been growing public attention on the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflicts. Yet the deplorable fact remains that civilians continue to fall victim to violence. Persistent violations occur, including the deliberate targeting of civilians, the indiscriminate and excessive use of force, and sexual and gender-based violence — in violation of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. Women and girls are particularly exploited as part of combat tactics, too many times becoming casualties with impunity.

Armed conflicts, with their manifold health, social, cultural and economic impacts, not only affect victims; they also affect victims' families, communities and societies, with long-lasting disruption. Indonesia strongly believes that the first step should be to build a culture of peace and to prevent armed conflicts from happening in the first place. That means that the international community should put a greater premium on conflict prevention, including the peaceful resolution of disputes. In our view, however, if a conflict does erupt, there are ways by which civilians, in particular women and girls, are best protected.

First, full adherence to international humanitarian and human right law by all parties to a conflict is the most important element. Parties should do everything feasible to protect civilians, in particular all vulnerable groups, including women and children.

Secondly, since the primary responsibility for the protection of women, girls and other citizens lies with the State concerned, the United Nations and other international partners should undertake enhanced efforts that support the building up of the relevant national capacities and enhancing synergy among the various national actors on the protection imperative.

Thirdly, all efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict must be founded on the tenets of human rights, security and development — the three pillars of the United Nations. Those three principles should guide our efforts to ensure that civilians are protected in conflict and in post-conflict situations.

In developing a more effective policy in this particular field, we believe that the Security Council should make use of inputs emanating from the various relevant initiatives under taken by Member States, including outside the United Nations framework, that involve engagement with a broad range of actors, including think tanks and non-governmental organizations working in the field. To cite a few examples in that regard, I would mention the series of regional workshops that have taken place; the Global Conference on Reclaiming the Protection of Civilians under International Humanitarian Law, initiated by Norway, in which Indonesia took an important part; and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, initiated by the United Kingdom, with which Indonesia associates itself.

It is worth underlining that women should not be seen just as victims, but also as peace enablers in mitigating conflicts. History has proven their credentials in creating peace. The policies of the United Nations system should therefore promote extensive measures to ensure greater participation of women at all stages, from conflict prevention to conflict resolution and from peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

I would also like to briefly share our view on how the United Nations missions can deliver their mandate to protect women and girls in times of war and post-conflict periods.

First, on prevention, we should continue to promote gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions at both the policy and operational levels. Integrating the gender perspective in humanitarian responses and development assistance relating to displacement and early recovery is significant.

Secondly, recognizing that women and girls have distinct needs, specific assistance and protection should be arranged accordingly. That includes ensuring women and girls's equal access to humanitarian assistance and providing specific basic services such as reproductive health and protection from gender-based violence.

Thirdly, to effectively ensure that women and girls can thrive as survivors and leaders in post-conflict situations, we have to empower them. Women can play a vital role as societies recover from armed conflict. It is essential to ensure their full participation in the economic and political lives of their nations.

To conclude, I reiterate Indonesia's commitment to working together with all partners in strengthening the protection of civilians, in particular women and children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your

presidency of the Security Council for this month. We would like to thank you for organizing this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We would also like to thank you for the concept note (S/2015/32, annex), which has made it possible to structure the debate on this very important topic.

You recalled rightly that 11 years ago the Secretary-General submitted his first report on the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. In fact, the Security Council adopted its first resolution on that topic 15 years ago, in 1999. We continue to hope that the successive discussions of the Security Council on the topic will lead to the development of a holistic methodology and an objective strategy for the protection of civilians in armed conflict by avoiding the twin traps of politicizing the notion of the protection of civilians and selectivity in its implementation. We endorse the concept note's content, as we know that civilians continue to be the majority of victims in armed conflict. However, those civilians are generally targeted by insurgency movements who take up weapons against women and children in order to provoke the international community against national Governments and to intervene in the conflict.

That is why we would like the message sent by the Council to those movements to be entirely clear. I would like to return to the statement made by the representative of the United States with regard to the situation in Darfur. Let us recall the facts. The allegations raised were based on rumours spread by Radio Banga, a radio station led by the insurgents. So it is an outlet representing the views of those insurgents. The United Nations conducted a field visit. A report was drawn up rejecting those allegations. However, we see that even today that some continue to recall those allegations as though they were facts. It was a radio station controlled by militias. It is not reliable, especially when dealing with such serious issues. The mission recalled, as I just said, that those allegations were not justified.

I would also note that many conflicts considered by the Council claim hundreds of thousands of victims, and the Council continues to not take any measures to deal with them. That is why I do not think we should be speaking of Darfur in discussing the issue of armed conflict. There is a great deal of misinformation, even among the parties to the conflict.

When we speak of the protection of civilians, I think we should prioritize peace processes and political settlements by forcing the armed movements to take part in the political process and peaceful negotiations in order to express their demands rather than resorting to military action and seeking to make civilian victims. I further recall that experience has shown that in many countries where there is no peace to be kept on the ground, peacekeeping operations are not able to protect civilians and fulfil their mandate. What truly protects civilians is peace for the entire population and the subsequent implementation of development, reconstruction, reintegration and disarmament programmes that then enhance programmes for the reintegration of returning displaced persons.

We have been speaking with the Council since last August regarding the withdrawal strategy of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. I recall that we have not yet received the third United Nations delegation. Intense negotiations are under way between the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations with regard to that peacekeeping operation. We ask the Council to support our withdrawal strategy, which would be implemented jointly by the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations.

The principle of the protection of civilians in armed conflict is a noble idea. However, we would like to express our concern at seeing this concept used for political ends, in particular in terms of promoting the concept of the responsibility to protect. We would like to recall that the principle of the responsibility to protect, while it is part of the final outcome document of the 2005 World Summit (resolution 60/1), continues to have different interpretations among Member States because it is in contradiction with the fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations concerning respect for the sovereignty of Member States, their legitimacy and their full responsibility for the protection of their citizens. I recall that the right of civilians to protection in armed conflict is just one among a number of rights and obligations highlighted by the World Summit Outcome, including the right to development, the fight against poverty and the prevention of conflicts by dealing with their root causes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Khalek (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to first congratulate Chile on its assumption of the Council presidency and for organizing this important debate.

The Security Council has succeeded, over the past 15 years, in anchoring the legal basis of the women and peace and security agenda by adopting resolution 1325 (2000), followed by six other resolutions. The most recent was resolution 2122 (2013), which linked human rights and violations of women's rights during and after a conflict. In spite of this legal framework of protection and by adding the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations to the mandates of peacekeeping operations, this focus did not deal with violence against women and girls in these regions that is committed by terrorist groups, thus the measures taken by United Nations have a limited effect in alleviating their suffering.

I should like to draw the attention of the Council to the following points. First, we firmly condemn all forms of violence targeting women and girls in conflicts because of terrorist groups in the Central African Republic, Somalia, Syria and other countries. We must ensure follow-up to the implementation of Security Council resolutions and take a more organized and better harmonized approach to collecting data and following up on resolutions. We must also redouble our efforts to ensure that transitional justice measures contain procedures to punish those who perpetrate crimes against women and girls in armed conflicts and their aftermath.

The empowerment of women in economic, social, political and cultural terms is crucial, as it is to ensure their participation in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and in peacebuilding. This is an essential element for dealing with the root causes of conflicts. Financial guarantees are also needed for the implementation of woman and peace and security programmes, especially in regions where women and girls are raped by terrorist groups or where State authority is practically non-existent or extremely limited in terms of human resources and financing. We must also continue to seek the best ways to respond to the challenges facing peacekeeping operations in the international context by implementing effective strategies on the ground.

The principal responsibility for protecting civilians lies with States themselves under international law and relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Egypt firmly believes that it is extremely important to address the root causes of these conflicts. In other words, eliminating poverty and social marginalization is essential to stabilizing any country, regardless of culture or location. This should be one of the priorities of every States during and after conflicts. States must take ownership of these strategies to achieve sustainable peace.

Egypt also believes that armed terrorism poses a serious threat to the safety of women and girls. The international community must spare no effort in this regard, and the United Nations and non-governmental organizations must focus on bringing to an end the violations of the rights of women in areas where such heinous form of terrorism exists. Programmes must seek to eradicate terrorism, not just deal with it in a superficial passing fashion. International financial organizations and donors must respond to this form of terrorism, which destabilizes the entire world and jeopardizes development as we embark formulating the post-2015 development agenda in September.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank Chile for having organized this important debate and Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang for her insightful statement earlier today. The briefings by Ms. Helen Durham, of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Ilwad Elman, of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, were very informative and useful.

The protection of civilians in armed conflicts is one of the core functions of the Security Council in its mandated peacekeeping missions. Civilians continue to be targeted in conflict. Women and girls, being the most vulnerable, bear the brunt of the devastation of conflicts disproportionately. Last year, the combined caseload of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons around the world crossed the mark of 50 million people; the majority of them are women and girls.

More worrying still is the fact that women and girls are being attacked by directly by parties to conflicts as part of their tactics. Violence against women is being used as an instrument of war. The plight of women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Syria and Iraq has mobilized the Security Council in the recent past to generate sufficient momentum for decision-making to protect women and girls in armed conflicts.

There is an increasing understanding of the need to enhance women's participation in all aspects of the prevention and resolution of conflict. The gender perspective has been integrated into the Council's protection-of-civilians agenda. Monitoring and reporting arrangements have also been made to prevent sexual violence. We agree with you, Sir, that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to reinforce the protection environment, which is an integral part of the protection of civilians. Parties to conflicts are bound under international humanitarian law to protect women and girls. Women must sit at peace negotiating tables to ensure that women's rights are protected during and after conflicts and during recovery, reconstruction and peacebuilding.

The present debate is timely because the Secretary-General's High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations is focusing on the protection of civilians. First and foremost, the Security Council should continue to curtail and end impunity for perpetrators of violence against women in conflicts and bring non-State actors under the ambit of international humanitarian law.

As peacekeepers face non-traditional threats, such as terrorism, extremism and transnational crime, existing measures and tools should be refined and strengthened to choke financing resources and bring criminals to justice. In this regard, we would like to make the following suggestions.

The command-and-control of peacekeeping missions should be streamlined and harmonized to pay particular attention to the protection of civilians, especially women and girls. The doctrinal differences regarding the protection of civilians and protection-of-civilian mandates should be resolved so as to enhance the protection of women and girls. Barriers to humanitarian access should be removed so that peacekeepers and the international humanitarian community can reach women and girls trapped in conflicts. The Council should continue constantly to ensure that peacekeeping and political missions institute monitoring mechanisms to enhance the protection of women and girls on the ground. The protection of civilians agenda should be broadly linked to the Secretary-General's Human Rights up Front initiative. Finally, the Council should devote a special session to dealing with the threats posed by violent extremism to the safety and security of civilians, especially women and girls.

United Nations peacekeeping and other relevant missions must be properly mandated and geared towards protecting women and girls caught in conflicts. As a leading participant in peacekeeping, Pakistan has regularly contributed to this effort. Gender sensitization as a core cultural value has been a mandatory part of our training for peacekeepers. Pakistani women have served as police officers, doctors and nurses in various missions in Asia, Africa and the Balkans. Our feedback about the work of the police officers is very positive. Women police officers instinctively, and because of their special training, show empathy to women suffering in conflict situations. These women in turn relate instantly to these police officers.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians. We should like to add a few additional points without repeating too much of what has already been said. I shall not reiterate comments on the various reviews under way, except to say that this year, as we review peace operations and the Peacebuilding Commission, we hope that the protection of civilians will be an unconditional core element of those reviews. In the public eye, the United Nations is truly expected to protect civilians in the field. That is a core task, and we very much hope that the reviews will focus on it.

As to the topic of today's debate — the protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings — we appreciate the focus. At the same time, we want to ensure that women are not just portrayed as victims during conflict. It is absolutely crucial that we emphasize the importance of women being part of the solution as empowered members of society, with the right to participate at every level of decision-making. Obviously, that is a long-term project, and we need to address vulnerabilities well before conflicts break out. Promoting gender equality, I believe, can best be done in times of peace and not as well during times of conflict.

Liechtenstein appreciates the increasing recognition of women's vital role in preventing and resolving conflict in peacebuilding, and not just a focus on their vulnerability. While the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Peacebuilding Commission in particular have very strongly acknowledged this, we need to translate those commitments into progress on the ground. We especially want to emphasize that

implementing those existing commitments is absolutely key and will require leadership, not just in United Nations Headquarters, but particularly in the field on the part of heads of missions, special envoys and so on. They must lead by example. They must ensure that an adequate number of gender advisers are deployed and that there is sufficient focus on including women in conflict-resolution efforts. In that regard, we should like to highlight the very positive examples set by Hilda Johnson in South Sudan and Mary Robinson in the Great Lakes region. These leaders have insisted on bringing appropriate gender expertise to their efforts. For example, one of the first things that Mary Robinson did as part of her conflict-resolution effort was to convene a women's forum for the Great Lakes region.

I would also like to briefly touch on the issue of criminal accountability. It is a fact that the United Nations and the international community have very limited tools at their disposal to fight violence against women and girls in conflict. Of course, we have peacekeepers and we have troops on the ground, but judicial systems are another hugely important tool not just to provide justice after crimes have occurred but also to provide deterrents. Both national and international justice mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), are crucial.

We have also seen increasing evidence of the deterrent effect of the International Criminal Court, especially with regard to actors who seek some degree of legitimacy. Deterrence can be very difficult to measure, but there has been a recent study on the issue and I think we should seriously look into it further. I would also like to remind Council members that the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has declared the fight against sexual crimes and violence against women as one of her priorities. Therefore, we really believe that the ICC is an important ally of the United Nations in the fight against sexual violence. We must also emphasize that criminal accountability must start at the domestic level, when possible. Sometimes that will require a great degree of capacity-building and creativity, as evidenced, for example, by the mobile courts that are under way in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, I would like to take a brief moment to draw attention to a slightly different issue that, thankfully, has already been raised today by the representative of New Zealand, whom I would like to thank for raising the absolutely crucial topic — the protection challenges faced by persons with disabilities in conflict and post-conflict settings. Persons with disabilities are highly vulnerable in conflict due to the multitude of challenges they face. There are three typical barriers that persons with disabilities face: barriers in the environment, barriers regarding communication and barriers in the attitudes of other persons. During conflict, all these challenges are exacerbated. Persons with disabilities confront some incredibly practical problems in times of conflict, such as having difficulty fleeing violence during attacks on civilians.

The problems faced by persons with disabilities are numerous. Just because persons with disabilities are largely invisible in society — including our own society — does not mean that they are not there. It is generally estimated that 15 per cent of persons in the general population have a disability. The rate is significantly higher in conflict zones, because conflict is of course a cause of disability. We read about casualty numbers, persons killed in certain incidents and persons injured. Those injured persons in many cases continue their lives as persons with disabilities, and as I noted, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by conflict.

Even more affected are women and girls with disabilities. They are at particular risk of violence and of sexual violence. It may seem hard to believe, but women and girls with disabilities are at higher risk because perpetrators often believe that they will get away with sexual violence against women and girls with disabilities, because nobody will believe the victim.

This problem has been little studied and requires the urgent attention of humanitarian actors and the Security Council. If we compare the level of attention given to this issue to that given by the Security Council to the protection of women and girls in conflict, we find that many policy debates have focused on women and peace and security and the challenges of protecting them. It seems that we have actually been struggling to say new things in such debates. However, the issue of persons with disabilities in conflict has barely been discussed in the Council. There appears to be a gaping hole on the issue. Respectfully, my delegation would like to call upon the Security Council to start building a ramp over that gaping hole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I thank you, Mr. President, for the invitation and for bringing the Council's dedicated attention to the critical issue of the protection needs and challenges faced by some of the most vulnerable and, potentially, most powerfully transformative members of conflict-affected societies — women and girls. We would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kang, Ms. Durham of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Ms. Elman for their valuable and powerful briefings today and for the work that they and their organizations do in some of the most challenging environments around the world.

As the United Nations community prepares to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) later this year, it is a timely opportunity for us to reflect on how effective the Council has been, particularly in its efforts to protect and promote the human rights of women and girls in conflict-affected situations and their roles in peace and security settings, and to see how those proactive efforts can be strengthened.

Of course, as many have acknowledged, the challenges facing the Council are immense, covering more simultaneous conflicts, having a greater impact on civilians and encompassing a wider breadth of the world. It is clear to us that in facing those many challenges, it is imperative that the Council move early to secure the protection needs of women and girls as conflicts emerge, and that it consistently and comprehensively apply a gender lens across the breadth of its work.

Today, Australia would like to highlight three key areas where we think the Council and Member States could usefully focus their efforts to substantively improve protection outcomes for women and girls in conflict and address the underlying causes of gender inequality. Acknowledging the many who have spoken before us on a range of very important issues, we are just picking up three particular issues that many have already addressed.

First, on improving women's participation in prevention and protection efforts, we think it essential to recognize and make full use of women's capabilities, particularly by ensuring that they play central roles in inclusive peace and security mechanisms, including the design and implementation of conflict prevention initiatives, conflict resolution strategies and post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation. We must also work to counter cultures of impunity for violations of women's human rights and ensure accountability for crimes perpetrated against them, as others have mentioned. Furthermore, in designing peacekeeping and special political missions, we encourage Council members and United Nations leaders to remain focused on the protection of civilians and on ensuring that mandates are implemented in a gender-sensitive manner.

Key to that is following up with practical action. We have heard some examples, such as deploying women protection advisers to address the protection needs of women in conflict, particularly from sexual violence, and deploying gender advisers who can be very instrumental in helping local women to participate in peace processes and empowering women in the area of legal and judicial processes. Of course, we strongly believe that the responsibility for the protection of women's and girls' rights is not a matter for women and girls alone. Men and boys have a vital role to play, and so it is critical that peacekeepers receive adequate predeployment training on protection of civilians, gender and human rights.

Secondly, as to empowering women economically and politically, a key element to strengthening the protection of women and girls and securing their livelihoods in post-conflict situations is prioritizing women's economic empowerment. The economic empowerment of women is a major priority of Australia's foreign affairs, trade and aid, and it is championed by our Government. Ensuring the full and equal participation of women in the political, economic and social spheres is fundamental to that; it must be embedded early and be a priority in all conflict resolution and post-conflict rebuilding efforts. It also links importantly to the eventual outcomes of the post-2015 development agenda discussion this year. It will be important for us to ensure that any discussion take account of conflict-affected women and girls and global efforts to promote economic growth and poverty reduction and to ensure peaceful and resilient communities.

Thirdly, we must ensure that United Nations missions and agencies collect, analyse and provide to the Council information and data on the gender-sensitive aspects of their work. We have seen how a lack of data, including sex and age-disaggregated data, fundamentally affects and undermines our prevention and response efforts. It is therefore important that United Nations missions and agencies monitor and report on both the gender aspects of their mandates

and the gender impacts of their work. It is equally essential to that this information be provided to the Council through regular reporting, as well as through briefings. Such information can be very powerful in conflict-prevention efforts, so we see it as an area of fundamental importance to the Council's protection efforts.

In conclusion, the year 2015 will provide us with a rare opportunity to strengthen the United Nations architecture on women's and girls' rights, including through the parallel reviews of resolution 1325 (2000), United Nations peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture. We must seize this chance together. Australia calls on those involved in the reviews to ensure that we make concrete and practical recommendations on how all arms of the United Nations peace and security architecture can work more effectively and consistently to protect civilians in conflict and to promote the rights of women and girls across the Council's agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. It once again confirms Chile's strong commitment to identifying and finding ways to resolve the most pressing issues related to international peace and security. Let me underline that Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to present a few remarks from our national perspective.

It is a sad paradox that in 2014, when the issue of the protection of women has been so widely noticed and so many actions have been taken, women were victims of unspeakable acts of violence, including abductions, sexual slavery, torture and rape. Women and girls were constantly attacked as members of religious minorities, including Yazidis and Christians in Iraq. They were disproportionately affected as displaced persons in the worst humanitarian crises in the world — in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ukraine. On the other hand, just last week the *New York Times* reported that 10 per cent of Western recruits to the so-called Islamic State were women.

The root causes of all these problems lie in the lack of respect for women and girls and in the multigenerational cycles of poverty. That is why we need to ensure the full inclusion of women at all stages of peace processes and in all follow-up activities, including in the re-establishment of the rule of law, constitution-making processes and transitional justice. Women and girls should be consulted at every stage of peacebuilding activity. They must play an active role in addressing causes of conflicts. Measures should be also taken to hold the perpetrators of sexual abuse accountable and to provide reparations for survivors of sexual violence.

The United Nations sets a good example in promoting women's empowerment. However, we need a holistic approach integrating Security Council actions with the efforts undertaken by other United Nations bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UN-Women. The year 2015 is a year of hope in that respect as it marks the anniversary of the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and the beginning of a new development agenda. Moreover, it is the year of the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture and peace operations. The protection of civilians, especially women and girls, should be at the centre of the actions undertaken this year.

For the past few years, Poland has been an active partner in implementing programmes and projects supporting women's and girls' economic needs. We have been involved in projects in Nigeria, the Sudan, Zambia and Kenya, as well as in Palestine, Afghanistan and other countries. Since it is women who are most severely affected by displacement in conflict settings, we have continued our assistance to the Syrian people by channelling resources via the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees field office that looks after Syrian refugees in Lebanon and by implementing the projects of non-governmental organizations for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon.

We are ready to act together with the international community in the spirit of resolution 1325 (2000).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Mawe (Ireland): At the outset, I would like to align my delegation with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union and its member States. I would also like to thank the external speakers, and in particular Ilwad Elman for her powerful and insightful remarks on the situation faced by women and girls in Somalia. And I thank you, Mr. President, for including the vital voice of civil society in the Council.

Early intervention to prevent conflict is of course greatly preferable to dealing with its consequences. In that regard, Ireland warmly welcomed the adoption of resolution 2171 (2014) in August. We continue to work with colleagues in the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group on strengthening the Council's conflict-prevention perspective and encouraging it to take action at an early stage to prevent conflicts occurring. But sadly, conflicts do occur and civilians do get killed, wounded and displaced. Indeed, in many cases, civilian populations are deliberately targeted. And while the precise data has not been agreed on, there is no doubt that as technology and weaponry have advanced and the pattern of conflict has changed, it is civilians and not combatants who are suffering more and more from conflict. We therefore have to ask ourselves how the United Nations can best act to minimize the impact of conflict on civilians. There are no clear answers, but we believe it is important to look closely at the integration of human-rights priorities into peacekeeping mandates and operations, with a special consideration of the impact on women and girls.

We strongly support the thorough and ongoing implementation of the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front initiative. Breaches of human rights should always serve both as a warning sign for potential conflict and an indicator of the need to protect civilian populations. We welcome the increasing integration of human rights components into peace operations, especially as they concern women and girls. However, in many countries and regions, including, for example, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria, there are gross violations of human rights, and those whose rights are most grievously disregarded are disproportionately female. While of course the primary responsibility lies with the parties to a given conflict, there is, however, a crucial role to be played by the United Nations. Ireland believes that the knowledge, experiences and perspectives of women should be factored into all conflict and post-conflict discussions. We strongly support efforts to increase the numbers of women active in the policymaking, planning and implementation processes related to international peace and security, and not just in particular conflicts but also in relation to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

The United Nations must show leadership here and play a more directive role in order to ensure that women are fairly and fully represented in conflict resolution and related processes. Like many other speakers, we also believe that gender advisers should be deployed in all United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, and we call for the further deployment of United Nations women protection advisers.

The protection of civilians affected by conflict should be at the heart of United Nations peace operations. We look forward to the review currently under way, focusing on how the protection of civilians can be made a central part of the mandates of all peace operations and ensuring that those charged with implementing the mandates have the necessary tools and support. For the United Nations to be credible in protecting civilians, troops deploying to difficult theatres to execute challenging mandates must have the ability, means and willingness to perform their task. We agree, for example, with the remarks made to the Council in October (see S/PV.7275) by the Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lieutenant General dos Santos Cruz, who stressed that all components of a mission must be proactive and ready to take action to protect civilians.

We must also acknowledge failures to protect civilians, such as those identified in the March 2014 report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which cited "a persistent pattern of peacekeeping operations not intervening with force when civilians are under attack" (*A/68/787, summary*). Some of those failures were due to poor leadership and a lack of accountability, which must be corrected. In that context, I am pleased to record that Ireland is providing funding to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to review command-and-control policy so as to address those and other issues. As a troop-contributing country of long standing, it is an issue that we have a strong interest in.

It would be naïve to expect that conflict can be eliminated in the short term. It is therefore vital that the Council and the Organization deploy their best efforts to protect civilians, especially women and girls, who play no part in conflict, do not support it and just wish to avoid falling victim to it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union, so I will just add a couple of remarks in my national capacity.

The protection of civilian populations is at the core of the mandate of the United Nations and the agenda of the Security Council. Yet civilians continue to suffer and are the primary victims of all conflicts. It is indeed highly regrettable that in the twenty-first century the outbreak, persistence and escalation of armed conflicts, and the recurrence of violence in post-conflict settings all over the world, have taken a particular toll on women and girls.

As the September report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security points out, in many parts of the world the situation has deteriorated significantly. We remain deeply concerned that, according to the report, there has been

> "a series of deeply troubling developments and abhorrent crimes linked to violent conflict and terrorism leading to new mass displacements, humanitarian catastrophes and serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law." (*S/2014/693, para. 76*)

As a result, for the first time in the post-Second World War era, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide has exceeded 50 million, most of them women and children.

Thousands of men, women and children from all ethnic and religious groups have been savagely killed and many more today remain at risk of genocidal slaughter at the hands of newly emerging terror groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and Boko Haram. Unrivalled in their savagery, they have specifically targeted women and girls through mass abductions of women and girls from religious minorities, rape, killings, forced marriage, forced prostitution and stoning. Such appalling practices have made it our moral responsibility to immediately respond by assisting efforts to bolster Iraq's efforts to protect civilians. The sad reality is that much, much more has to be done to reverse the catastrophic consequences of those groups' continuing actions.

The Security Council has had an undeniable role in raising awareness of the fact that women and children are uniquely and disproportionately affected by conflicts and their aftermath. The President's concept note (S/2015/32, annex) rightly points out the important role that the Security Council has played in that regard. Significant progress has also been made in the evolution of the international normative framework on the protection of civilians. Furthermore, with every passing year the consensus grows stronger around the idea that while the primary protection of civilians lies with States, it is also a legitimate and necessary focus of collective action. But progress made at the normative level makes sense only if translated into tangible action on the ground. It is therefore important that we recall the need for the Security Council to act swiftly and resolutely in all situations affecting civilians.

On a final note, we would like to recognize that there have been some important steps taken to provide justice by making those responsible for human-rights violations accountable. By creating the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and referring the situations in Darfur and Libya to the International Criminal Court, the Security Council itself has provided important examples. We regret the fact, however, that the Council has not been able to act on Syria or, unfortunately, Ukraine. Civilians continue to be targeted and killed today — now.

As the Council itself has acknowledged, it is equally important to ensure humanitarian aid and funding by providing a full range of medical, legal, psychological and livelihood services to women affected by armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. Sixteen years after the end of the conflict in our neighbour Kosovo, thousands of female victims of rape, many of whom were helped to abort forced pregnancies, are still struggling to properly address the trauma after the conflict. In that context, the role of civil society and national and international non-governmental organizations has proved critical.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that the upcoming twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre and the tenth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit offer an opportunity for all of us to renew and further the commitment made at the Summit to protect populations — women, girls, the elderly, boys and men — from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. We must live up to that.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Bolaños Pérez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of Chile for organizing this open debate on the eve of the 2015 high-level review by the Security Council to assess progress in implementing resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, we believe that addressing this issue is very timely. We are also grateful to Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Ms. Helen Durham

and Ms. Ilwad Elman for their respective statements. We are also grateful for the concept note (S/2015/32, annex), which the presidency circulated among all delegations and which contains valuable guidance to focus our debate.

It is undeniable that women and girls suffer the most devastating effects, in addition to the effects that are already part of an armed conflict, particularly because of the increasingly widespread use of gender-based violence, rape, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, the unwanted pregnancies resulting from these deplorable acts and their stigmatization in their own communities — all of which affect their mental and emotional stability and even put them at risk of losing their lives.

Any response that addresses these women and girls must take into account the trauma they have suffered and continue to suffer as displaced women, through flashbacks, constant rejection and prolonged separation from their families. They therefore require assistance and counselling for rehabilitation on a massive scale. However, the road to recovery also involves the attempt to restore some kind of normalcy to their lives, including through employment, which brings with it the dignity of earning their own money and the freedom of spending it themselves, and providing an education for their children because that engenders hope for a better future. Similarly, for a girl, going to school, even though it may be in a bombed building or in a refugee camp, symbolizes a system, a routine and a path to normalcy, recovery from trauma and overcoming it. The empowerment of women starts in childhood with access to education, the certainty that women's rights are protected and promoted and the conviction that they are part of all the processes that affect their well-being and their future.

Despite all this, women should not be considered only as victims of war. They have a fundamental role to play in ensuring the survival of their families in the midst of chaos and destruction and actively participate in the movement for peace at a community level and promote peace within their communities. However, the absence of women at the negotiating table and in the roles of mediators, negotiators and technical experts in peace processes is undeniable.

Furthermore, we are concerned with the emergence of new and more radical armed groups; the fragmentation of the armed forces and the increase of other crueller groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram, which use sexual violence as a weapon of war and which have been changing the landscape of armed conflicts by forming alliances; and the emergence of other structures — some in opposition to their Governments and others in association with them. In that connection, I would like to stress Guatemala's support for the United Kingdom's initiative on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict. Ending that scourge is a global responsibility. For this reason, we believe that the focus on the protection of civilians should develop in accordance with changing circumstances. We believe that in societies with greater gender equality, extremism is less likely to take root and women are less vulnerable to its effects.

We must ensure that all the instruments at the Council's disposal are adequately adapted to combat crimes against civilians, particularly women and children, and contain solid elements of deterrence, accountability and justice. The lessons learned from conflicts — from the worst failures to best practices — should serve as a useful guide. All these instruments available to the Council should be used consistently to impose sanctions, including in cooperation with the International Criminal Court and special tribunals, fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that justice is served and put an end to impunity for crimes committed against innocent civilians.

The protection of civilians is a legal obligation. We must ensure that members of the security forces, local militias and other armed groups who have committed violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law be held accountable. It bears repeating again that United Nations troops cannot be a substitute for the State in fulfilling its basic commitment to protect its civilian population. When States are unable or unwilling to honour that commitment, we face major humanitarian disasters, as we have seen repeatedly in recent years and even in recent weeks in Iraq, Syria, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, among other countries.

In order to protect and strengthen the rights of civilians and displaced people and integrate the rights-based orientation of governmental structures, we must increase the capacities of public institutions, which tend to be dismantled or weakened after a conflict. This requires ensuring that the practice of protection be made more coherent and effective through training

and awareness-raising among members of the national security forces; supporting local civil society groups working in the field of human rights and the protection of displaced women; and conducting awareness-building activities for the rights of displaced women with relevant stakeholders. Like others, we believe it is important for the United Nations to redouble its efforts in training peacekeepers in multidimensional United Nations mandates.

We must ensure that the special needs of women and girls in the field receive the special and privileged attention they deserve in the framework of the active cooperation of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that relate to the issue and Member States with the support of non-governmental organizations and civil society. We call on them to continue their valuable contribution in response to the challenges that reality presents.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van der Vliet (Netherlands): I would like to start by thanking Chile for organizing this important debate on the protection of civilians.

I align myself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to thank Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Ms. Ilwad Elman, representative of the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security for their valuable contributions to this debate.

I would like to make three points today on women as agents of change, on peacekeeping and on the importance of the prevention of conflict.

First, the rights of women and girls are increasingly under attack in armed conflicts. When the role of women as agents of change in society and as contributors to peace processes is undermined, the stability of societies and of peace itself is eroded. It is therefore imperative to integrate the protection needs of women and girls systematically in the protection of civilians agenda. The Netherlands attaches great importance to implementing good practices related to the improvement of the position of women. For example, in Syria we work with the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Women to support the Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace and Democracy.

My second point relates to peacekeeping. We welcome the high-level review of United Nations peace operations, as well as the Global Protection Cluster whole-of-system review of protection in humanitarian action. We also welcome the continuing efforts of the Secretariat to strengthen the policies and guidance on the protection of civilians. We urge the Council to examine the challenges impeding the implementation of protection of civilians mandates more systematically, specifically where they pertain to the needs of women and girls.

With regard to concrete contributions to peacekeeping, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is doing its share. We train our staff to protect civilians effectively. Between 2007 and 2017 we will be contributing €54 million for capacity-building through the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance programme. Together with Spain, we conduct gender training for civilian, military and police personnel who are to be deployed as part of United Nations missions. We also fund Phase II of the Senior Women Talent Pipeline project, aimed at placing more qualified women in senior positions in United Nations missions. We also fund the female military officers training project of UN-Women, which aims to facilitate and increase the deployment of female military, and we are contributing €5.6 million to the Women on the Frontline programme for the 2013-2016 period, aimed at the Middle East and North Africa region.

On 16 and 17 February, we are organizing a conference on women, peace and security with particular attention to enhancing participation and leadership of women in conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding. We aim to gather concrete inputs for the United Nations high-level review on resolution 1325 (2000). We want to share real examples of action and change — and learn. The conference will take place in parallel with a regional European conference in support of United Nations peace operations, also in the Netherlands. The conference aims to feed into the United Nations peace operations review. Both conferences intersect on the topic of gender perspectives in peacebuilding and peace operations, and both reviews are thus of direct relevance to each other.

My third and last point is on the importance of prevention and mediation. Ensuring the rights of civilians

before, during and after armed conflicts is essential, because we know peace is fragile and conflicts often repeat themselves. That is why conflict prevention, good offices and mediation are so important. And to be effective, we must ensure early on that women are at the centre of these efforts. When mass atrocities do occur, the Security Council should strongly condemn them. Failure to do so contributes to a climate of impunity. We support the French initiative aimed at voluntary restraint in the use of veto by permanent members of the Security Council in situations where mass atrocities are imminent or deemed to be occurring. And we believe that the principle of responsibility to protect should be increasingly applied and further operationalized.

I want to end by focusing briefly on protection by humanitarian actors and also of humanitarian actors. Humanitarian relief is under extreme pressure. Relief organizations are stretched to the limit and face increasing difficulties due to the arbitrary denial of access, funding shortages and even attacks on humanitarian personnel and medical staff. This is unacceptable and must be condemned by the Security Council. We welcomed the debate that took place on this issue at the initiative of the United Kingdom last August.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The commemoration in July this year of the twentieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, described by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as "the worst crime committed on European soil since the Second World War", in which more than 8,000 people were killed and more 25,000 women and girls were forcibly deported, many of them after being subjected to rape and torture, is not only a sad reminder but also a deep commitment to the principle of "never again". That is why the debate you and your delegation have called, Mr. President, is so timely.

I welcome each of the briefings made by the different persons invited to inform us at this meeting of the Security Council on the protection of civilians with a special focus on the situation of women. I recall the most recent briefing to the Security Council, in October 2014, by Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka, in which she discussed the chasm that exists and persists between what is and what should be, between the facts and the law (see S/PV.7289).

If I may, I would like to evoke an initiative of the current president of Chile when, in her first term, she invited Chilean society to make a new social contract, a new covenant, a covenant that will have equality as its substance and point of view, including the fundamental equality between men and women. In that same spirit, I want to draw the Security Council 's attention to what is being discussed in other organs.

The post-2015 agenda is not just a set of good and clear ideas; it is the substantive pressure brought to bear by the ideal of our time. And that is why this agenda is destined to become a new social, economic, environmental contract at the global level which we all need. This agenda will certainly have an impact on the international peace and security the Council is charged with overseeing. This agenda, based on an ideal that is known and felt to be urgent, complex, ambitious, is a political ideal etched with compassion and insight with respect to the geography of this global, uncertain, interdependent, fearful, dynamic, violent world. It is a necessary agenda because if humankind were content and the world were full of wonders then this agenda post-2015 would have no justification whatsoever.

And we are acting with awareness of how far we have come far but also, and to a greater extent, of how far we still have to go. This year, in which our Organization celebrates 70 years of existence, whose ideal embodied in the Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly tells us that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the recognition of the inherent dignity of all members of the human family and of their equal and inalienable rights. The people of the United Nations have reaffirmed in the Charter their faith in fundamental human rights and dignity and value of the human person and the equal rights of men and women.

We will not go through all the articles, but without fear of error we could affirm that the ideals in the Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights are contained in the post-2015 goals, in particular with respect to the cause of women, which is none other than that of equality and freedom. When we proposed to make poverty a priority, we did so not because we believe or think that all poor people are good but because the poor are poor. In that context, we also have to work

for freedom and equality for women not because we believe that women are blameless but because they are human and have the right to dignity.

If we were to make equality and freedom as the right of all people, there would have no place for violence against women neither in conflict or post-conflict situations or in peacetime. Until now, however, we have not been able to prevent forced marriage from affecting more than 400 million women worldwide, nor have we been able to innovate ethically. We will not be able to prevent it from extending to more than 142 million girls during this decade. Until now, it has been very difficult to prevent 86 million girls around the world from suffering mutilation of their external genitalia from here to 2030 if the practice continues at the current pace. Until now, world hunger does not spare women, who represent a little more than half of the world population; in fact, of the 842 million people who are hungry more than 60 per cent of them are women. About half of all pregnant women have anemia. Until now, and beyond the progress made, if we take a snapshot picture of the state of education worldwide the image we would get would show us that of the number of children not attending school, around 93 million, most of whom are girls.

With regard to the world of work, in particular the world of paid work, if we exclude women in the agricultural sector we find that more than 60 per cent of female workers are in informal employment. And what can be said of human trafficking? It is a big business, as is that of weapons, amounting to $32 billion dollars annually. And who tends to be the victims of that trafficking? We are — women and girls. We have been unable to save 66,000 women per year from falling victim to femicide; the over 500,000 whose lives are repeatedly put in danger; or the 70 per cent of women who will experience violence at some point in their lives; or prevent the abuse of a woman every 18 seconds somewhere in the world. And why have been unable to prevent all of this? It is because women's equality and freedom need to be more than just an idea; they have to be a reality, a feeling, and an expression of will. If gender equality and freedom could be the mere manifestation of an idea, then the statistics I just shared, which highlight the suffering and humiliation of millions of women in times of conflict, post-conflict and peace, would not exist.

We have come together here today to say that we did not choose to be born women, but once we were born, we came to learn that we needed to act collectively to prevent the de facto entrenchment of the idea that being a woman is equal to being nothing, that our bodies can be used as weapons of war. We are discovering little by little that throughout the world this emanicpation involves efforts to prevent any and all attempts to make our lives, be it in times of conflict or peace, a constant punishment, a source of shame and inequality simply because we are women.

All women and many men feel that this is the case. While there is a single woman who lives in terror due to the simple fact that she is a woman, those who are more fortunate will not be at ease. We know this not because we are good, but because since our births we have had this reality and perpetual disgrace before our very eyes. We know it is possible and plausible to humiliate women with impunity everyday in conflict and post-conflict situations and in times of peace. The world will not be viable, economically fairer, environmentally sustainable or more socially inclusive if it is ethically regressive.

Some of those present might ask, "Well, what innovative ideas have you brought?" To that, I would say "none". And that is the worst part. I am repeating what has already been said in the Charter of our Organization. I am saying what has already been said in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am repeating what the victims have said in conflict and post-conflict situations and in times of peace.

The World Food Programme launched an amazing programme that has provided fuel-efficient stoves to more than 2 million people over the past few years and improved the living conditions of all families it has touched in those countries where it operates. Did it launch that programme so that men and women could prepare their meals with greater peace of mind and in relative comfort? No. Does anyone know why the World Food Programme was launched? It was launched in situations of conflict because those fuel-efficient stoves made it possible for women to avoid leaving their shelters for a number of days in search of fuel, where doing so would have ended in their rape and humiliation.

The Council and this world can do much. We acknowledge the pioneering role played by resolution 1325 (2000), but we should all move beyond ideas that are merely clear or different, and toward a set of ethics, and the will to transform those ideas about gender equality and the freedom of women into a reality. The

dignity of the human race, as well as international peace and security, are at stake.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ahmad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this very important meeting. This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations, which has made the preservation of humankind from the horrors of war its highhest priority. The Organization has given the people of the world the hope that they can live in peace and security. Unfortunately, however, the past 70 years have clearly shown that the United Nations has been unable to meet the aspirations of its founders, despite the wealth of experience it has accumulated over the years.

Although 16 years have passed since the Security Council started its periodic set of debates on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, experience has shown that the protection of civilians continues to be exploited in a selective way based on a policy of double standards. It is being used for schemes that run counter to the fundamental rules of international law. It is enough here to recall the unjustified, unacceptable manoeuvres that have led to the violation of the integrity of Libya as a State, people and territory, under the pretext of protecting those very same Libyans. My delegation would like to reaffirm the following points.

First, conflict prevention should be undertaken with a view to finding compromise and peaceful solutions to conflicts before they escalate, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It is only in that manner that we will be able to protect civilians, including women and girls, and save them from the horrors of war.

Secondly, the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians against the dangers that they may be exposed to, including the threats of terrorism, lies with the relevant State, the only party that has the right to maintain stability and security throughout its territory.

Thirdly, civilians in armed conflict cannot be fully protected without unwavering compliance with international law and the provisions of the United Nations Charter, including the principle of sovereignty, sovereign equality, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Fourthly, a discretionary approach to protecting civilians is unacceptable, as it transforms the protection of civilians into a tool to serve the policies and interests of influential States to the detriment of the sovereignty, stability and independence of other Member States. The exploitation by some members and non-members of this Council of the concept of the protection of civilians to impose their selective policies and double standards on the Council can only undermine the role mandated to it by Charter of the United Nations.

Fifthly, a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians is necessary to remedy all those concerns that could pose a danger to them, including by putting an end to unilateral coercive measures of which the United Nations has already affirmed the illegitimacy in this era of globalization. I refer here to measures imposed by certain States upon other States, including Syria, that harms their people by depriving them of the means of subsistence, including food, medicine and fuel, and by compelling them to seek refuge abroad, and consequently fall prey to gangsters, human traffickers and other horrors.

My delegation reaffirms the need to protect the civilians sufferingt under Israeli occupation, including in the occupied Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories. We need to put an end to the practices of the Israeli occupation. Israel believes that it enjoys impunity because the Council has not responded to violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and other international instruments against terrorism. It therefore pursues its aggressive policies with full impunity and continues to support to terrorist groups active in the separation zone in the Syrian Golan, thereby threatening peace and security in the region and beyond.

In their statements, numerous speakers have underscored the great suffering of Syrian women and girls. Many of these speakers, however, simply ignore the fact that the main reason for the plight of Syrian women, who are subject to all forms of persecution and inhumane treatment such as human trafficking by terrorist organizations, lies in the policies of Governments that back terrorism.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its call on the Security Council to meet its Charter responsibilities by condemning the terrorism from which all Syrians — men, women, children and the elderly — are suffering. States that back terrorism

must end their destructive practices, which are a grave violation of international law and international counter-terrorism instruments — including resolutions 1267 (1999), 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005), 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014), as well as the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy — and pose a threat to international peace and security.

My delegation reaffirms that all counter-terrorism measures must be coordinated with the Syrian Government while respecting its sovereignty. In this regard, we wish to highlight that the so-called international coalition has recently carried out a number of air raids targeting a centre for the deaf and mute in the province of Raqqa, depriving many special-needs individuals of access to its services. The same air raids also destroyed a number of other economic centres.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-Garcia (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks the Chilean for having convened today's open debate on the protection of civilians, focused particularly on protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls. The twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action provides us with the most fitting framework for this debate. We welcome the input of civil society on this item, and we commend Chile for having invited Ms. Ilwad Leman to address the Council. We hope that this practice will continue in the future, as recommended by the Secretary-General.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network, and wish to make the following points in our national capacity.

Costa Rica is deeply concerned by the content of the concept paper before us, which states that in many settings, "control of women's rights is at the very centre of the armed conflict" (*S/2015/32, annex, p. 2*). We are alarmed by the deliberate campaigns against women and the restrictions and conditions placed on the human rights of women and girls by extremist groups, as well as in the tragic evolution of terrorist activities targeting women and girls. We must reject any violation of the human rights of women and girls through the strict imposition of sumptuary codes, and attacks on women in public employment, schools, girls and teachers. We recognize the interlinkage of such practices with extremist violence. In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2014/693) demonstrates that violence against civilians often accompanies restrictions on the rights of women with respect to clothing, travel, education and employment.

In societies with greater gender equality, extremism is less likely to thrive and women are less exposed to its impact. We categorically condemn any form and manifestation of terrorism, given its destructive impact on civilian populations, societies and international security. Costa Rica deplores the activities carried out by the group known as Boko Haram, particularly the abduction of school girls, and self-styled Islamic State, which undermine the rights of women and girls. We call on the Security Council to redouble its efforts to combat such barbaric acts within the framework of international law, to consider the more effective use of sanctions committees to that end, and to bring those responsible to justice.

We also express our deep concern at the ongoing use and widespread impact of weapons against civilians, including men, women and children. Against this backdrop, we would like to raise the following issues.

First, it is important to sign, ratify and fully implement the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), including its provision relating to the criteria for gender-based violence. The devastating impact of cluster bombs on civilian populations is well known, and we must put a definitive end to their use. Despite the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which Costa Rica has the honour of presiding, we have unfortunately seen the continued use of these weapons in recent conflicts. We call on the signatories to ratify the Convention and on all other States to join. States parties to the Convention are legally obligated to stop using them, but given the impact of these weapons on civilians, it is a moral obligation for everyone else. Costa Rica therefore also supports an international commitment to ending the use of explosive munitions in densely populated areas.

Finally, we note the importance of including in all mandates of United Nations missions provisions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as stated in resolution 2122 (2013), including specific provisions on the protection of women and on zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. As we have indicated in other forums, extremist violence is not representative of humankind or of any particular culture or religion. It is an affront to the rule of law and

to our common humanity. Respect for human dignity, the bedrock of human rights, is present in all cultural and religious traditions. We must combat the culture of hatred and foster a culture of peace that will build inclusive and cohesive societies that respect human rights in their entirety.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Mr. Mažeiks (Latvia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Latvia and Estonia. I thank Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General of Humanitarian Affairs; Ms. Helen Durham, Director on International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Ilwad Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their statements. I also thank the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for organizing this debate and focusing on the protection challenges faced by women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Estonia and Latvia align themselves with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Remarkable achievements have been made at the normative level to operationalize the women and peace and security agenda. Women's protection has also been at the centre of many Security Council deliberations. However, challenges lie at the implementation level and in sustaining progress. We look forward to the high-level review and the global study on progress and obstacles in implementing resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the follow-up resolutions. The year 2015 will be an important one for the advancement of women's rights due to the convergence of the review with other global policy events, such as the post-2015 development agenda and the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. We should take full advantage of those opportunities to recommit ourselves to the women and peace and security agenda, and to address the specific needs and challenges faced by women and girls, including in conflict and post-conflict settings. Latvia and Estonia will spare no effort in facilitating progress in that regard.

The increase in conflicts and violent extremism over the past year has had a dramatic impact on civilians, in particular on women and girls. Last Saturday's barbaric shelling of Mariupol by terrorists, in which 30 innocent civilians perished — two-thirds of them women and children — is a grim reminder of why our work on this issue must move forward. The perpetrators of that senseless attack and their supporters must face the consequences. We are also concerned about the continued incidence of sexual and gender-based violence, and the targeted attacks against women and girls and those defending their rights. We welcome the increased use of the human rights- and sexual violence-related criteria in the Security Council sanctions regimes. All parties to armed conflict should comply with international humanitarian and human rights law.

We stress that all crimes of sexual violence should be prosecuted and punished under national and international law. Accountability is an important element in enhancing the compliance of parties to armed conflict with their international obligations; it is equally important for bringing justice to victims of those crimes. National authorities have a primary responsibility to provide accountability for serious human rights violations; at the same time, the International Criminal Court continues to play a crucial role if they are unable or unwilling to do so.

Latvia and Estonia support efforts to mainstream gender aspects into peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping operations need to be equipped with robust mandates that put the protection of civilians, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, at their core. The key elements of the effective implementation of those mandates are, among others, appropriate training for peacekeeping personnel and their senior mission leadership; effective coordination among all mission components and between peacekeeping operations and other United Nations actors on the ground; as well as close cooperation with the local population, civil society organizations and local institutions. It is also particularly important that women's rights violations be adequately reflected in the periodic reports of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to the Security Council. We welcome efforts to build capacity for gender-sensitive conflict analysis and the use of sex-disaggregated data.

Latvia and Estonia strongly believe that issues related to the women and peace and security agenda should be fully integrated into the various reviews currently being undertaken by the United Nations on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sanctions. We welcome the Secretary-General's Rights Up Front

initiative to develop a coherent approach to human rights issues throughout the United Nations system and to strengthen early warning and preventive capabilities.

In a year when several global processes provide an opportunity to put priorities and commitments on gender equality at the centre of the international and national agendas, we cannot afford to backslide on women's rights. Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to addressing security challenges faced by women. Women's representation and participation at all stages and levels of decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings are essential to voicing women's rights and concerns early on, and to ensuring their protection.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the commitment of both Latvia and Estonia to gender equality and women's empowerment, and their readiness to contribute to all ongoing processes to ensure that sustainable progress is made so that women and girls can enjoy all their human rights.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Chile for organizing this open debate on the protection of civilians, and for choosing to focus on the specific needs of women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings.

Luxembourg fully associates itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union.

The year 2015 will coincide with several important events. The high-level review on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will undoubtedly be the significant events of the year in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Two other important reviews will take place this year, relating to United Nations peace operations and the peacebuilding architecture. In terms of the protection of civilians, all of these reviews should help us to identify ways and means to improve our methods of action. To that end, it is imperative that all the findings and recommendations of these distinct but complementary studies be coordinated to ensure synergy.

The concept note that you, Sir, have circulated for this debate (S/2015/32, annex) and the briefings made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs amd the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security have well described the tragic plight of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and the numerous widespread violations of international humanitarian law to which they are subject. That is the case in Syria, Iraq — where Daesh uses sexual violence as a weapon of war — the Central African Republic and South Sudan, where women are impacted disproportionately by the massive displacements of populations. It is also the case in Nigeria, where Boko Haram deliberately targets women and young girls. The list, regrettably, is far from exhaustive.

Given this widespread scourge, all Member States, regional organizations, bodies and entities of the United Nations system and civil society organizations should work together to provide a protective environment for civilians. The Security Council in particular must act consistently by ensuring that those responsible for crimes committed against civilians are brought to justice, and by taking targeted measures against those responsible for grave violations of human rights. On its field visits, the Security Council should systematically raise the issue of the protection of women with the relevant authorities and meet with local women's organizations.

The same consistency of action is necessary in establishing peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. These missions should have an adequate mandate and sufficient resources to protect civilians, including through the deployment of gender advisers and advisers for the protection of women and children. These three types of advisors, it must be remembered, each has a specific role to play. The Council should also continue to keep abreast of the situation of women and girls by regularly inviting to its debates the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, or the Executive Director of UN-Women.

While the protection of civilians and the specific needs of women and children lie at the centre of our debate, it would disempower women to limit them to playing the passive role of victims. We must ensure strengthened participation of women in mediation, conflict resolution and in all political processes. Since 2010, Luxembourg has been supporting a programme conducted by the Department of Peacekeeping

Operations promoting the political participation of women in the aftermath of conflict. This programme has resulted in progress in terms of women's participation and organization in Timor-Leste, Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. It has also shown that protection the rights and the physical and moral integrity of women is an important precondition for them to take their rightful place in the field of political action.

In conclusion, let me express our wish that the ideas put forward in this debate will be implemented consistently with a view to improving the protection of civilians on the ground. We must all mobilize so that 2015 can deliver on its promise and start the change that millions of women and girls around the world are waiting for.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): Women and girls are among those most affected by the growing number and intensity of conflicts around the world. They continue to be specifically targeted conflicts, often subjected to such sexual violence and various forms of political, economic and social discrimination. It is women who are most affected by mass displacements, protracted crises and humanitarian emergencies. They are also vulnerable in post-conflict situations, mostly during contested political processes, ceasefires and the early days of the implementation of peace agreements. The risks of sexual and gender-based violence, in either in rural or urban settings, are growing and transforming.

Against the backdrop of the threats and needs facing civilians, especially women and girls, a stronger and more inclusive approach is required in order to achieve the goals set by resolution 1325 (2000) and its subsequent resolutions. Strengthening our political will comes as a first step. We also need to find creative ways to respond to the challenges facing women and girls at all stages of the conflict cycle. We should be cognizant of the lessons learned and best practices.

In conflict situations, working to eliminate the root causes of conflict would be the best way to prevent sexual violence and threats against women in a sustainable manner. In the short-to-medium term, protecting against gender-based violence, the prosecution of such acts, seeking a multisectoral response and continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to women and girls is imperative. Adherence to the principles of international humanitarian law in this context is particularly important.

Ensuring the inclusivity of decision-making and policymaking, as well as peace processes, mediation efforts, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is another important step. The social and economic empowerment of displaced women and girls must be among the priorities. Inclusion and empowerment are the best tools in combating violent extremism. Continuing to strengthen the integration of the protection of women and girls, and deepening the gender perspectives in the United Nations system's normative frameworks, entities and practices would be a final step towards promoting protection.

Today in order to contribute to the debate on best practices and lessons learned, I would like to stress in particular the challenges and threats facing displeased women around the world, based on our own experience resulting from the tragic conflicts just across our borders. In response to the enforced displacement due to the tragedies in Syria and Iraq, Turkey has taken key steps to ensure durable solutions to policies encompassing the principles of prevention, protection, participation and empowerment.

It terms of participation, we prioritize women's participation in camps by including them in decision-making and camp administration. Camp management staff has been trained to facilitate and encouragement women's participation and representations in camp community relations.

Regarding protection, adequate numbers of women staff are employed in camps to maintain quality healthy, education and security services for women and girls. The psychosocial and reproductive health needs of women are given particular emphasis. For instance, the psychosocial support service centres project, financed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, establishes 11 centres outside and 20 centres inside the camps in order to address the psychological needs of women and their families.

On prevention, special measures were put in place to prevent assaults within camps and to protect groups. Outside camps, measures are taken to promote the monitoring and prevention of domestic and sexual violence where significant populations of displaced people live.

In terms of empowerment, the enrollment of girls in schooling and continuing education for women is a priority policy for Turkey. Over 68,000 Syrian children are enrolled in education and close 40,000 adults have received vocational training. The displaced families and women have the opportunity to attend lectures on issues such as maternal health, child mentality, psychosocial support, human rights and the domestic violence. It goes without saying that the international community's strong support to these efforts is crucial in order to make sure that there will be no lost generations in our region just because we can not offer them hope and opportunity for their future.

We are looking forward to the various review processes to be conducted this year on strengthening the United Nations response to violent conflict, among which the global review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) will be of particular importance.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the Chilean presidency for their efforts to connect the women and peace and security agenda with the general protection of civilians to debate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Mminele (South Africa): The South African delegation wishes to thank the Republic of Chile for its leadership in convening this open debate and for your presence here today, Sir. We would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang for her consistent and visionary leadership on protection in all its dimensions. Out thanks go too to Dr. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms.Ilwad Elman, from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their insightful briefings.

The violence against women and girls, which is on the increase, is becoming a worrisome global scourge. South Africa applauds the fact that the international human rights and humanitarian law systems have produced a body of law for protection in this regard. The challenge is very often a matter of failure by States to implement the key provisions of these instruments as well as failure to comply with their obligations. To this end, we call on all States committed to taking concrete and tangible measures for the maximum protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict to faithfully implement the relevant Conventions, that is to say: first, the 12 August 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention as well as its 1977 additional protocols, and, secondly, the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which was adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011.

Thirdly, in October 2009 the African Union, for its part, adopted the Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention, which remains a vital tool in addressing the root causes of displacement in Africa, where around 10 million people are displaced because of conflict and climate-change related natural disasters, among other things. And, fourthly, there is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, which is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Together with other international instruments, these provide us with clear guidelines on how to address the protection of children in armed conflict.

South Africa is firmly committed to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, which seeks to address many challenges facing women and children. Furthermore, South Africa has consistently highlighted its major concerns about the apparent lack of political will to address the fact that generations face severe vulnerabilities and lack of protection in Palestine and Western Sahara. Children and women in those situations of armed conflict have for decades been unable to live a decent life of peace and security and unable to fully ensure the upbringing of their children in a secure environment. In that regard, noble programmes, such as the realization of Millennium Development Goals, sadly remain unattainable.

South Africa welcomes the international community's efforts to protect civilians in armed conflicts. However, the in-country participation of all the relevant stakeholders must be sought. While positive efforts and progressive steps are being made, it is clear that the lack of political will and the complete disregard for civilian lives remain a major obstacle to their protection during armed conflict. It is therefore important that, as international actors and external organizations provide constructive assistance, they should comply with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, while fully respecting the will,

sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country concerned and refrain from forcible interference. In that regard, South Africa strongly believes that all-inclusive dialogue and national reconciliation should be promoted in order to reduce the scourge of violence, which will also prove valuable in finding solutions and laying the groundwork for sustainable peace in crisis situations.

The Secretary-General's latest report on women and peace and security in September 2014 (S/2014/693), highlights some progress on all areas of the women and peace and security agenda, as well as some notable challenges and gaps. A sustained, integrated approach in a coherent and coordinated manner remains critical to ensuring effectiveness. The most notable challenge, however, continues to exist at the level of implementation. It is at this practical level that we see a lack of progress pertaining to the actual protection of civilians, including women and girls. Women and children, especially those displaced from their homes, in violent conflict areas are especially vulnerable to attack, including rape, trafficking and all manner of physical, sexual and psychological abuse. We have too often seen cases whereby female civilians taking no part in hostilities become the deliberate targets of war or find themselves in danger simply because they happen to be in an area where conflict is taking place.

The African Union Agenda 2063 — "A global strategy to optimize use of Africa's resources for the benefits of all Africans" — has a vision to free the African continent from armed conflict, terrorism and extremism, intolerance and gender-based violent crimes. It furthermore aspires to silence all guns by 2020, and my delegation views this move as an important stride forward. We are also pleased to learn that the Security Council encourages States to adopt minimum standards and codes of conduct in their armies, militias and police services, and to ensure their implementation to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence as a result of power imbalances. Further to that, the acknowledgement by the Security Council that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach based on coherence between security, development, political activities, human rights, including gender equality, justice activities and the rule of law, is particularly encouraging. It should be stressed that actions by peacekeeping missions to protect civilians will be successful only if there is confidence and trust in the security mechanisms and institutions and in the rule of law of the host country.

In the past year, we have witnessed some significant advances when the Security Council adopted resolutions that allow for practical expressions to our collective need to ensure protection of civilians with an emphasis on the challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. Actions undertaken, such as efforts to strengthen early-warning mechanisms and risk assessments with gender-sensitive indicators, serve as points of departure. The interaction with civil society and women peacebuilders regarding the collection of information and reporting is also pertinent. However, the development and significant changes in the mandates, monitoring and training of peacekeeping missions remain vital factors. Examples of what has been achieved among the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the United Nations country teams joint-assessment missions to identify humanitarian and security concerns in camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur have enabled a degree of success.

I would like to conclude by commending all personnel involved in peacekeeping missions and civil society groups for the services they perform. Often they are inadequately resourced for the enormous challenges that they face on a daily basis. South Africa will continue to interact closely with them to allow them to perform their vital international role.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to commend Chile for conducting the presidency of the Security Council in the month of January in such an outstanding way, which has been confirmed again today by its convening this timely and important debate.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

This week, we commemorated 70 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp — indeed a very special day in the history of humankind. In the past seven decades, we had said "never again" many times, yet we allowed genocide in Rwanda and then again in Srebrenica to ensue. We keep saying "never again", but unfortunately, it continues to occur, and we are have been witnessing horrible crimes committed against civilians in conflicts throughout the world. It is still happening in Syria. Under-Secretary-General Amos, in

her briefing to the Council in December, said that in Syria, "The parties to the conflict continue to ignore the most basic principles of humanity" (*S/PV.7342, p. 2*). She continued, "We have run out of words to fully explain the brutality, violence and callous disregard for human life which is a hallmark of this crisis" (*S/PV.7342, p. 2*).

It is still happening in northern Nigeria, where Boko Haram continues its campaign of terror. It is still happening in Iraq, with atrocities, brutality and barbaric acts perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The list of conflicts and abuses goes on and on. Many lessons from the past have been learned, and the international community does have a much deeper understanding of the impact of war on civilians. The United Nations has become increasingly concerned about the protection of civilians, the testimony to which is today's debate. Nevertheless, we are still far from succeeding in our efforts. Civilians continue to account for the vast majority of casualties in current conflicts; they are regularly targeted and subjected to indiscriminate attacks and other violations by parties to conflict.

The focus of today's debate is on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. We fully support that approach, since it is a well-documented fact that women and girls suffer greatly from the direct and indirect effects of fighting and violence. Croatia is deeply concerned and troubled by numerous reports of violence against women and girls, especially rape and other forms of sexual violence. For us in Croatia, every story of every girl or woman who is a victim of sexual violence and rape, whether in Syria or the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Darfur or any other conflict zone, is a poignant reminder of the horrors that many women in Croatia went through during the Homeland War in the 1990s.

As a result of that war, many women in Croatia were victims of maltreatment, torture, humiliation and degrading treatment and rape, which was used as a method of intimidation and terror. Two decades after those war atrocities were committed, these women, their families and their communities are still coping with devastating and lasting consequences. Sexual violence is not only one of the most heinous crimes committed against women in conflict, but at the same time, it is one that is often the least visible. Therefore, Croatia believes that time and again we have to raise our voices against sexual violence and that the international community can and must do more to prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict. For us, it is also of the utmost importance that rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict be recognized as war crimes and crimes against humanity, for which the International Criminal Court is also competent.

Protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings are numerous, including pregnancy as a result of rape. It is therefore vitally important to ensure full access on the ground to comprehensive health care for the victims of sexual violence and to meet their needs, whatever they may be. It is our obligation and responsibility to stand by the victims, to find better ways to prevent all forms of violence against women in conflict and to assist the survivors.

The United Nations protection-of-civilians infrastructure should not only keep women and girls issues in focus, but also provide women with more prominent roles in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations. Stronger women's participation should be a part of every enhanced response, including humanitarian work on the ground.

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of the International Criminal Court and its crucial role in the context of the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The perpetrators of such heinous atrocities must know that they will not escape justice. They must be aware that they will be held accountable and pay for their crimes. That is why it is important to strengthen the relationship between the International Criminal Court and the Security Council.

Let me conclude with the words of Ms. Eve Ensler, the American playwright and activist who raises awareness on sexual violence against women. In April 2012, Ms. Ensler participated in a round table in the Croatian town of Vukovar, on the plight of women victims of rape and sexual violence. On that occasion she said,

> "I have sat here today and listened to the words of women who have been victims of rape, and I was simply overcome by fury. The life of one woman is the life of all of us. If someone inflicts pain on one woman, he has inflicted pain on us all."

I am sure that we as the international community hear those cries of pain. We cannot afford not to.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on such an important matter. On behalf of the 15 States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), I wish to express appreciation to you, Sir, for providing us with an insightful concept note (S/2015/32, annex) to guide today's discussion on protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict as well as in post-conflict situations. Let me also thank all of the briefers for their comprehensive briefings at the commencement of the debate this morning.

In recent years, the world has witnessed an upsurge in conflicts that have led to an unprecedented increase in violence against women and girls. The increase in violence leading to humanitarian catastrophes has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Women and girls are more vulnerable as a result of gender inequality and of being directly targeted as part of war tactics and deliberate assaults on their rights.

It is widely recognized that emerging unconventional threats to peace and security associated with the proliferation of militias, armed groups, jihadists and terrorists linked to violent extremism affect women and girls more than their male counterparts. In that regard, women and girls constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in armed conflict, as well as in post-conflict situations.

It is estimated that three quarters of the population of refugees and internally displaced persons are women and girls. Displacement exacerbates existing gender inequalities, thereby amplifying the discrimination and hardships borne by both women and girls. It also causes women heightened risk to poverty, human trafficking, sexual exploitation and child, early and forced marriages.

SADC recognizes that the majority of the world's conflicts are in Africa. We believe that States have the primary responsibility to protect their women and girls from all forms of gender-based abuse, particularly in conflict situations. While international cooperation and assistance are important, they should not and cannot replace the role of the State in protecting women and girls. We also recognize that the economic empowerment of women is essential in any prevention and protection response.

In the year 2000, the Security Council laid the foundation for the women and peace and security agenda in the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), which calls for the special protection and full participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in post-conflict and peacebuilding processes. Today the narrative on conflict prevention and resolution reflects our commitment to prevent sexual violence in conflict and to address its disastrous and far-reaching consequences.

At the continental level, the launch, on 2 June 2014, in Addis Ababa, of the African Union (AU) five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme attests to Africa's commitment to addressing challenges and needs faced by women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings. The Programme is designed to serve as a framework for the development of effective strategies and mechanisms for increased participation in the promotion of peace and security. The appointment by the AU Commission Chairperson of a Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security reaffirms the continent's commitment to firmly addressing issues affecting women and girls in conflict situations.

At the regional level, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, signed in August 2008, seeks to harmonize the various commitments made by member States in continental instruments to achieving gender equality. Articles 20 to 25 of the Protocol provide for the implementation of a variety of strategies, including enacting, reforming, reviewing and enforcing laws aimed at eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and trafficking. Article 28 of the Protocol provides for the equal representation and participation of women in key decision-making positions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, as well as for the integration of a gender perspective in the resolution of conflicts, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security.

While considerable progress has been achieved since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), gaps remain in trying to achieve sustained change and overall peace and security. There is growing consensus that a peace process that does not include women is flawed. It is our firm belief that women's economic, cultural, political and social rights underpin democracy, stability and lasting peace.

However, it is regrettable that, in spite of the existence of legal and normative frameworks, women

and girls continue to suffer. SADC is concerned about continued gross abuses, sexual exploitation and abduction of women in areas of conflict. We urge the international community to collectively respond to the specific needs of women and girls in armed conflict and to enhance the integration of a gender perspective in the work of United Nations entities and partners in a holistic manner. That entails addressing the root causes of conflict and strengthening national infrastructure for peace and reconciliation. We need to do more work on deterring newcrimes by holding perpetrators accountable. More attention should be given to women's roles as leaders and to teir participation in decision-making, which must be meaningful in order to realize opportunities for positive change. Women should not be viewed merely as victims and survivors, but also as a great resource for the communities and countries they live in. We know that women's participation is essential to building sustainable peace, and it is therefore important to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is duly reflected in all engagements relating to international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the continuing strong support of the Southern African Development Community for the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): Since the adoption of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), much progress has been made on the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. However, civilians, especially women and girls, continue to be caught up in armed conflicts around the world, thereby facing increased threat and violence. From Syria to Iraq and from the Central African Republic to South Sudan, the plight and vulnerabilities of women and girls are aggravated by sexual and gender-based violence. As recognized in resolution 2122 (2013), women and girls continue to be exposed to extensive human-rights violations in conflict and post-conflict settings. Bearing in mind our shared concern, I would like to make a few observations on this important issue.

First, the Security Council must integrate issues relating to women and peace and security into its work in a more systematic way. While we recognize that it has incorporated gender perspectives into several resolutions, particularly those related to United Nations peacekeeping mission mandates, we further encourage the Council to provide clear, decisive and consistent protection mandates concerning women and girls. At the same time, in order to fully implement the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse initiated by the Secretary-General, it is important that we stress gender perspectives in United Nations peacekeepers' predeployment training. Dispatching more women protection advisers, and expanding sanction designation criteria to include gross violations against women, is a practical measure that can be taken to facilitate concrete results on the ground.

Secondly, women's empowerment and participation must be strengthened in the peacekeeping, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes. Their needs, priorities and voices should be reflected in the relevant decision-making processes. Official development assistance (ODA) should be expanded to help improve women's capacity in that area.

Thirdly, accountability is key to the protection of women and girls in armed conflict. The Security Council can employ various means to end impunity for those who harm women and girls, such as making referrals to the International Criminal Court and mandating international commissions of inquiry. Given the equal importance of ensuring accountability at the national level, we recognize the ongoing efforts to strengthen the capacity of national justice systems by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009).

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been making great efforts to promote the human rights of women in fragile and conflict-affected areas, including providing predeployment training on gender equality for all persons dispatched to peacekeeping operations, as well as implementing ODA projects designed to promote women's empowerment in conflict situations, as described in our national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea, as a strong supporter of resolution 1325 (2000) and the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, reaffirms its commitment to international efforts to protect women and girls in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank the Ms. Ilwad Elman and the representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Committee of the Red Cross for their briefings.

The protection of civilians is a pressing priority for the Government of Afghanistan. The Afghan people have suffered for more than 30 years as a result of war and conflict, and continue to suffer today. The past year was the deadliest for civilians in Afghanistan since 2001. The Taliban and other extremist armed groups are responsible for the overwhelming majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. They directly target civilians with their brutal violent campaigns and utter disregard for human life. They carry out heinous acts of terror on mosques, markets, schools, homes and critical infrastructure, and threaten communities by planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and launching suicide and complex attacks in public places. They target men, women, children, clergy, tribal elders, Government officials and justice-sector employees alike. Let me be clear: attacks on civilians are a sign of weakness, not strength. They are a serious violation of international humanitarian law and breach the basic tenets of Islam.

The women of Afghanistan have borne the brunt of conflict during more than 30 years of war. They have been the biggest victims of violence. The past year in Afghanistan was particularly deadly for women, with 12 per cent more killed and injured than the year before. Women in Afghanistan, including women in public roles and girls seeking education, are often targeted with every kind of gender-based violence. Even when their lives are not directly at risk, their livelihoods are affected by the negative consequences of violent conflict. When husbands, parents, siblings and guardians die or become handicapped, women are often left as the family's sole breadwinners. Many lack access to paid work and financial resources, which impedes their ability to provide for themselves and their families and makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Women displaced by conflict are also economically vulnerable and at a heightened risk for exploitation and discrimination.

Mitigating the specific impact of conflict on women is a priority for the Government of Afghanistan. In that regard, the Government is implementing resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent related resolutions through Afghanistan's national action plan on 1325 for women, peace and security, signed in October 2014, and our national action plan for the women of Afghanistan. Moreover, the Government recognizes the importance of women's active participation in ending conflict, and is committed to ensuring that women's voices are represented in peace, reconciliation and development efforts in the country.

As attacks on civilians by armed extremists in Afghanistan are increasing around the country, the Afghan national defence and security forces have been engaged in large-scale counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency efforts. It is tragic that Afghan civilians, including women and children, are caught in the crossfire of security operations. However, I would like to emphasize that the Afghan forces are doing their utmost to ensure that the safety of civilians is central to their campaigns, and they are taking all necessary measures to prevent the loss of life among Afghan civilians. Thousands of members of the Afghan security forces have lost their lives fighting armed insurgents; their bravery and sacrifice are a testament to the Government's strong commitment to protecting civilians and bringing peace and security to the country. In addition, the Government of Afghanistan is pursuing the vigorous implementation of our national counter-IED strategy and facilitating ongoing training of the Afghan national defence and security forces to conduct counter-IED operations and disposal.

Unfortunately, a number of civilian casualties occur as a result of explosive remnants of war, which pose a serious threat to Afghan civilians, particularly children. Indeed, the majority of the casualties caused by explosive remnants of war have been among children. With the sharp rise in kinetic engagements in 2014 and the conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force mission, the associated risk to civilian life from such remnants of war is at its highest level. In that regard, I would like to highlight the importance of robust efforts to fully support the Afghan national defence and security forces in marking hazardous areas, ensuring the clearance of explosive remnants of war from the battlefield and continuing awareness-raising programmes that educate civilians, particularly children, of the deadly dangers of explosive remnants of war.

The cycle of violence that has interrupted the lives of innocent Afghans for over 30 years must stop. To that end, my Government is vigorously pursuing a

reconciliation agenda with the armed opposition and engagement with countries in the region to move the process forward. With the support of the international community and our neighbours, peace and security can be realized in Afghanistan and all civilians can live with honour and dignity in a country free from violence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I thank you, Sir, for organizing this open debate on the protection of civilians. I also thank Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Ms. Ilwad Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their respective briefings earlier this morning.

As the United Nations is celebrating its seventieth anniversary this year, we recall that our Organization was founded on the determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person. Since the creation of the United Nations, the Security Council adopted a number of resolutions and strategies to protect civilians in conflict, including the landmark resolution 1265 (1999). Nonetheless, while the international community, and the United Nations in particular, has adopted an array of strategies to improve and implement protection-of-civilians mandates, we are extremely concerned by the increasing number of conflicts around the world and the frequent targeting of civilians, including women and children.

Over the years, the world has witnessed armed conflicts marked by systematic violence and mass atrocities against civilians. While the protection-of-civilians agenda has evolved to become the core mandate of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the increasing violence against civilians has tested the fundamental principles and capabilities of those operations and demonstrated that much remains to be done. Experience on the ground, however, has demonstrated that peacekeeping operations that are ill-prepared, with no adequate means to address large-scale violence directed against civilians, will falter and may even collapse.

Often there exists a gap between the expectations of the civilian protection and the actual military capabilities of peacekeepers. We believe that threats to civilians and the ways of addressing them should inform mission mandates, strategies, structures and the allocation of resources. In that respect, as a follow-up to the high-level summit on peacekeeping operations held last September on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, Rwanda will organize, on 28 and 29 May in Kigali, an international conference on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts to further reflect on how to better implement the protection mandates of peacekeeping missions.

Today, peacekeepers and other key actors who are supposed to provide protection to civilians in armed conflicts often struggle to deliver on the promise of the protection of civilians, embodied in the very heart of the Charter of the United Nations. In the Great Lakes region, for example, we are unfortunately still facing roaming predators against civilians, mainly the so-called Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Indeed, this genocidaire movement continues to use civilians as human shields, forcefully recruit children and rape and sexually abuse women and girls. Given this dark picture, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo need to show more commitment in the neutralization of the FDLR, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the region and the relevant resolutions of the Council. Four weeks after the expiration of the deadline given to the FDLR for peaceful disarmament, we believe that the time for announcements, communication and tough talk has passed. This is the time for action.

The conflict in South Sudan also reveals serious protection gaps that require immediate attention. The situation in Syria and Iraq have gone from bad to worse with terrorist activities by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which commits the worst sorts of human rights violations against civilians, including journalists and humanitarian workers. As difficult as the situation might be, we believe that the international community still has a responsibility to use all its leverage to save those populations in dire need. In that regard, we commend the role played by the international coalition against ISIL, led by the United States, which is in line with our collective responsibility to protect.

On women and peace and security, the Government of Rwanda considers any violence against women and girls to be an assault on human dignity. We call for and support the full implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1960 (2010), which insist that all peacekeeping mandates incorporate provisions that specifically identify steps to address sexual violence. That should include the clear identification of women's protection advisers alongside gender advisers and human rights protection units, as well as a clearly defined role for women in post-conflict recovery. We also call for improved monitoring of sexual violence, and for more effective identification of good practices and challenges.

In conclusion, let me emphasize, as we did during the past two years of our membership in the Security Council, that the best way to protect civilians is to prevent conflicts in the first place. We call on the Security Council, the wider United Nations system and regional and subregional organizations to ensure that addressing the root causes of conflicts remains at the top of our collective agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and for the concept paper contained in document S/2015/32. I would also like to express our appreciation to the representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and civil society for their insightful contribution to our discussions.

The protection of civilians is a human, legal and political imperative and requires concerted efforts to ensure that all actors respect this responsibility. We cannot but agree with the view that greater compliance with international humanitarian law is an indispensable prerequisite for improving the situation of victims of armed conflict. In that regard, we appreciate the joint initiative of Switzerland and the ICRC on strengthening compliance with international humanitarian law in preparation for the thirty-second International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

The challenges to the protection of civilians are enormous. The main obstacle relates primarily to the frequent failure of parties to conflict to comply with their obligations under existing legal rules. It is imperative that all parties to conflict abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

Inaction and the neglect of civilian suffering, along with the prevailing atmosphere of impunity and lack of accountability, are among the most challenging problems giving rise to a need to act. Ending impunity is essential for the purpose not only of identifying responsibility among parties to a conflict and individual perpetrators, but also of ensuring sustainable peace, truth, reconciliation, the rights and interests of victims and the well-being of society at large.

Intentional targeting has become a common feature of conflicts in many parts of the world. It uniquely and disproportionately affects women and girls and does not leave much room for doubting the danger of the phenomenon and the necessity of timely action.

Particular consideration must be given to the protection of civilians forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict. My country supports the continuing efforts being made to raise awareness of the problem of internal displacement and the right of return.

Another alarming manifestation of violations against civilian populations is the contesting of the status of civilians per se and the principle of protection despite persistent evidence that persons in question belong to the category of non-combatant. Hostage-taking, illegal detention and prosecution constitute grave breaches of the international humanitarian law. This issue is of a paramount importance to my country, Azerbaijan, which continues to suffer from Armenian aggression and military occupation that inherently involve a wide range violations of the rights of Azerbaijani populations for the last two decades.

The most recent examples of such violations are the cases of Messrs. Hasan Hasanov, Shakhbaz Guliyev and Dilgam Askarov. While visiting the graves of their parents buried in the occupied region of Kalbajar, Mssrs. Guliyev and Askarov were taken hostage and are facing fabricated criminal charges. Mr. Hasanov was killed on 11 July 2014. It was not before three months had elapsed, on 2 October 2014, that Mr. Hasanov's body was returned from the Armenian side through the mediation of the ICRC.

With regard to the two captured civilians, Messrs. Guliyev and Askarov, who are being required by the Armenians to answer for false and unfounded accusations as some kind of diversion, it is pertinent to

clarify that these civilians were captured on their own territory, that is, within the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Except the conditions specified by the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan, no one — and I emphasize, no one — has the right to impose restrictions on or prohibit the free movement within the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Needless to say, putting Messrs. Guliyev and Askarov through illegal court proceedings, sentencing Mr. Askarov to life imprisonment and Mr. Guliyev to 22 years in prison, and subsequently forcing them to appeal, is null and void.

Through you, Mr. President, I call on all relevant international human rights and humanitarian actors to intervene and take the lead in preventing those persons from being subject to illegal detention, prosecution and incarceration while it is not too late and they still are alive. In that regard, we appreciate those countries that have rejected the so-called court and its verdict. We commend the work of the ICRC and its dedicated staff and look forward to their continued engagement in the release of our civilians.

To conclude, I would like once again to commend the initiative of the Chilean presidency to convene this very important open debate and advance the theme of the protection of civilians in armed conflict within the work of the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): I thank you, Sir, for giving the floor to Ukraine to contribute to this important and timely debate. Let me also thank all briefers for their important messages.

Ukraine is alarmed by the fact that civilians continue to account for the majority of casualties in conflicts. Many of those civilians are women and girls. The high number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is disturbing as well.

The year 2015 marks 15 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which established the basis for the women and peace and security agenda and called for special protection for, and the full and equal participation of, women in all conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The resolution has proven to be an effective instrument for Member States to implement their policies in this important area. We look forward to the global review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015. We hope that it will provide additional impetus to fulfil all our commitments on women and peace and security.

Ukraine actively supports the efforts of States Members of the United Nations on the implementation of resolution 2122 (2013) on the need to address the full range of human rights violations and abuses experienced by women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

Ukraine is very alarmed at the latest United Nations reports on the violence in countries where women have been directly targeted and disproportionately affected by mass displacement. We fully agree that women's rights are under threat and that the role of women in countering terrorism and extremism is underutilized.

A national action plan in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000) to promote women's full and equal participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peacebuilding and peacekeeping and incorporate a gender perspective in all areas of peacebuilding is being developed by the Government of Ukraine in close consultation with United Nations agencies and civil society. We expect the plan to be adopted in Ukraine this year and we are ready for its full implementation.

The terrorist groups armed and supported by the Russian Federation continue to act openly in the east of Ukraine. Civilians, including women and children, continue to die from Russian bullets and shells that are illegally brought into the country. According to the latest official statistics, the number of the internally displaced persons in Ukraine due to Russian aggression stands at 921,640 people.

About two thirds of adult IDPs are women. The Government fully understands their specific needs, as most IDP families include elderly and unaccompanied women with children. In that regard, the law on IDPs was adopted in Ukraine on 20 October 2014, and was welcomed by the international community, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The law is aimed at ensuring the rights and freedoms of IDPs, including women, and at addressing key issues in this area, including through facilitating humanitarian assistance.

In its recent report, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine finds that, in the Donetsk region, women comprise about 15 per cent of those killed and 15 per cent of those wounded as a result of the conflict. There have also been incidents of

abductions and sexual violence by illegal armed groups whose whereabouts remain unknown.

We are particularly alarmed by the fact that people in the territory of Ukraine are being abducted and illegally transferred to the Russian Federation for interrogation. Ukrainian servicewoman Nadiya Savchenko, captured in the Luhansk region in July last year, remains in a detention facility in the Russian Federation without any legal grounds and has been subjected to inhuman practices that constitute a flagrant violation of international law and a breach of obligations under bilateral treaties. Even after obtaining international immunity as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Nadiya Savchenko remains in prison.

The most ironic and bullying aspect of this situation is that Savchenko is now being charged by the Russian authorities for illegally crossing the Russian border. We demand the immediate release of Nadiya Savchenko and will make every effort to ensure that those involved in her abduction and illegal detention are brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Safaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): First of all, I would like to thank Chile for organizing today's open debate. I think the broad participation of Member States in the debate is an indication of the success of Chile's initiative. I would also like to thank the briefers for their excellent input to the discussion.

My delegation asked for the floor just to react to the allegations made by the representative of the Israeli regime during this meeting. I would like to state the following.

What the representative of that regime said in today's meeting was totally irrelevant to the subject of the debate. It is absurd that the representative of a regime with the darkest record on the protection of civilians in recent history allows himself to fabricate baseless allegations against others.

I do not need to repeat the facts about war crimes committed by that regime during its recent aggression and invasion of Gaza or the fact that more than 80 per cent of the victims during that invasion were civilians, including children, women and the elderly. I believe that nothing other than the blood of these innocent civilians on the streets, hospitals and schools, including those belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, can show the nature of the regime. It is an interesting tactic. If you fail to defend your acts, then choose to attack others. The representative of the regime, as usual, embarked on attempts to divert attention from its own heinous and repeated acts of aggression against and occupation of civilians and the violations of the territorial integrity of other States in the region.

It is indeed very ironic that a regime famous for its atrocities and apartheid policies, which are well documented by the United Nations, its repeated violations of internationally recognized borders, war crimes, crimes against humanity, attacks or threat of use of force against civilians, its neighbours and beyond, a regime with a well-known record of developing, producing and stockpiling different kinds of inhumane weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, tries to preach to others on the protection of civilians and purports to be the voice of victims.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank the Chilean presidency of the Security Council for organizing this debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings. I also thank Ms. Helen Durham, Director for International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ms. Ilwad Elman of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for the relevance of their respective briefings.

Women and girls are often deprived of protection and support during armed conflicts. They bear the brunt of the devastating consequences of conflicts because of their significant vulnerability and their substandard living conditions. They endure all the afflictions of armed conflicts: hostage takings, captivity, torture, rapes, forced marriages, summary executions, arbitrary detentions, forced displacements, threats and intimidation. Girls in particular are subject to the increasingly widespread practice of kidnapping, and both women and girls are used as human shields near weapons stockpiles or barracks and suffer from the direct or indirect effects of hostilities, such as bombings, famines and epidemics.

Rape is often the most widespread form of violence, in particular in refugee camps and camps for displaced persons. Unfortunately, women and girls are often not provided with any security in such situations owing to the militarization of certain camps, the proliferation of light weapons and the infiltration of armed elements into refugee populations. We are all called upon to act, and efforts by the international community in this regard must be coordinated.

Morocco strenuously condemns such barbarous, brutal and inhumane practices, especially since their serious consequences further complicate the establishment of lasting peace and reconciliation. Gender-based violence, the threat of such acts or incitement to commit them constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law, in particular the Geneva Conventions and international human rights law.

This year is the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). That resolution recognizes the contribution of women to peace and security at the national and international levels and encourages their participation in all aspects of conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Since 2000, six other resolutions have been adopted by the Council on this subject, thereby strengthening the normative architecture aimed at protecting the rights of women during and after conflict. Morocco welcomes the efforts of Member States to implement those resolutions at the national level, the growing number of action plans that have been signed or that are in the process of being negotiated on the protection of women and girls, and the efforts undertaken by UN-Women and UNICEF.

However, we must recognize that the progress achieved to date in terms of the effective implementation of those resolutions remains very limited. The slow pace of progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the impunity that continues to be enjoyed by those who have committed acts of sexual violence promote a very unsafe environment for women and girls.

Women are unfortunately underrepresented at all stages of peace processes. There are many obstacles that prevent their participation in the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding. Very few women are able to effectively participate in public life in the period following conflict because of violence, intimidation, insecurity, lack of rule of law, cultural discrimination, the rise of sexist extremism and fanaticism and socioeconomic factors, including poverty and lack of education. Morocco believes that women's marginalization threatens to delay or undermine the establishment of lasting peace, security and reconciliation.

The protection of women and girls from all kinds of violence in conflict periods and the realization of their fundamental rights during and after conflicts remains a collective responsibility that requires determined, coordinated and joint efforts with a view to enhancing the measures that can be taken to restrain those who commit and order violent acts to be committed against women and to prevent the recurrence of such crimes. Firm measures should be taken on an urgent basis to promote accountability for all those who continue act in defiance of international law and the norms of protection for women and children. Morocco recalls, in that regard, the obligations of the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and recalls the commitments laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and all the resolutions dealing with the issue of women in armed conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to highlight the following points. Morocco believes that women should participate fully, effectively and on an equal footing in all the stages of peace processes, given the crucial role they play in preventing and settling conflicts and in peacebuilding. Morocco highlights the key role of women in repairing the social fabric of countries emerging from conflict and stresses that they must be included in the drafting and implementation of post-conflict strategies so that their needs are taken into account. It is crucial to strengthen women's empowerment, which can contribute to effective peacebuilding following conflicts. It is important that women be appointed in sufficient numbers to decision-making positions and as high-level mediators and members of mediation teams. In addition, national strategies for women and girls' protection remain dependent on measures taken to strengthen Government's capacities and the availability of material, financial and human resources ensuring their definitive status, emancipation and independence. Therefore, it is important that there be a prompt and generous response to the call by the Secretary-General

in his report (S/2014/693) inviting donors to provide the funds necessary for the implementation of plans of action and national programmes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

Ms. Mogobe (Botswana): I would like to start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. We wish you every success in the continued discharge of your duties. We would like to echo the appreciation the delegations that spoke before us have expressed to you for organizing this very important meeting and for the opportunity to be briefed by the personalities you succeeded in assembling for that purpose. The information they shared with us earlier has been extremely insightful and helps to broaden our understanding of the issue we are discussing today.

We also take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the subject matter, which we found informative, even though some aspects therein, pertaining in particular to the risks faced by populations in armed conflict as well as to peacekeeping mission operations, were cause for some concern.

Botswana joins the international community in deploring the attacks claiming innocent lives as well as the gross human rights violations occurring in the increasing number of war zones and areas of violent conflict across the world. We find it tragic indeed that the lives of the innocent, including women and children, continue to be lost due to indiscriminate killings by those who apparently have a complete disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law.

It is true that States have the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, be it in armed conflict situations or wherever human rights abuses occur. It is, however, also true that all responsible members of the international community have a critical role to play in the construction of societies that are strong enough to prevent and address atrocities. Given the enormity of populations at risk, it can therefore be argued that we, the members of the international community, have not been proactive enough in upholding the second pillar of the responsibility to protect and building that required capacity that would assist States in shielding their populations from harm.

What remains an unequivocal fact is that more needs to be done to ensure accountability and compliance with international law. We therefore support the clarion call for the Security Council to fully exercise its Charter mandate and ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, as that would represent a significant step towards the compliance we seek. In that regard, it would also be important for the relationship between the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to be strengthened, and for the work of the Court to be facilitated so that it may hold perpetrators of human rights violations and other mass atrocities accountable.

The concerns I have just raised notwithstanding, it is only fair that the Council be credited for its notable efforts in this regard. We are informed that at present the Security Council has 16 peacekeeping operations deployed around the world. We commend the Council for this work, which understandably presents its own variety of complex challenges. These include ensuring the very safety of the personnel involved in peacekeeping operations, as they themselves are increasingly becoming targets in the conflicts they are deployed to end. We have recently seen United Nations peacekeepers killed while on duty in countries in conflict. The proliferation of terrorist groups and foreign fighters also serves to increase the potential dangers and risks facing peacekeeping missions. We have also seen young school girls abducted and used as pawns by terrorists. These evolving dynamics necessitate a comprehensive review, including the development of an all-inclusive framework that ensures the security and safety of United Nations personnel in their various assignments, as well as that of the security forces and rapid-response teams in the affected countries. These mechanisms must also elaborate methods through which women and girls in conflict situations can be protected.

I shall now turn to the specific focus of today's debate. As other delegations have emphatically pointed out, it is women and girls who suffer the most insidious acts of war, including sexual violations, gender-based violence and other human rights abuses. As this year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there could me no more opportune a time for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the protection of women and girls in all situations, as well as to their advancement, to gender equality and, within the context of today's debate, to the six strategic objectives focusing on women and armed conflict. Among others, those include the need to increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making

levels, to promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace and to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee and other displaced women. The need for a rededication to these objectives cannot be overemphasized. It is critical fully to implement resolution 1325 (2000). We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's high-level review thereof, which is scheduled for later this year.

We also see the international community readying itself to adopt a new global agenda later this year intended to deliver the future we want. To realize this goal, it is clear that we will need to redouble our collective efforts to ensure the protection of current and future generations.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's support for international efforts aimed at protecting the lives of innocent people, women and girls in particular.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Ms. Radwan (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this important meeting on the protection of civilians, especially women.

Israel, the occupying Power, cannot speak about human rights or the protection of civilians, especially the rights of women, in any form and should not try to whitewash its infamous record of well-documented crimes against women and children. How can a Power conducting an occupation and implementing a policy of settlement address such issues? My delegation condemns all of these violations, which run counter to international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

What attention was paid to the protection of civilians during the aggression committed by Israel recently in Gaza, indiscriminate attacks that resulted in the killing of more than 2,000 people, most of them civilians, making no distinction between men, women, children or the elderly? What about the systematic policies of demolishing homes, displacing and killing people, or the consequences of the siege against Gaza in terms of violating children and women and putting extreme restrictions on the daily lives of Palestinians there?

Israel has persistently violated the rights of Palestinian and Arab women in such a way as to constitute war crimes. It has committed the epitome of human rights violations by forcing Palestinian women to give birth at checkpoints, potentially leading to the loss of newborn babies.

Israel does not comply with international instruments protecting the human rights of women in detention, thus Palestinian women in prison are subjected to the worst forms of violation. I will not speak at length, as the record of such violations has been well-documented by bodies of the United Nations. However, we call on the Security Council not to remain silent in the face of these violations but to take action so as to bring the perpetrators to justice — those who claim democracy and respect for human rights while exhibiting a flagrant disregard for human conscience.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like very briefly to respond to the statement made by the representative of Ukraine.

Such attempts yet again to place all of the blame for what takes place in that country onto the Russian Federation come as a surprise to no one. Even the reports regarding the shelling by the Ukrainian army of residential areas, in violation of international humanitarian law — reports coming from a variety of sources, which cannot in any way be regarded as Russian propaganda — provoke no response from Kyiv other than yet further accusations against the Russian Federation. Quite clearly, our Lithuanian colleagues also take a selective attitude to such sources as well.

The reality is that on 13 April 2014, our delegation initiated the convening of an emergency meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.7154) in order to attempt to prevent the Ukrainian authorities from using armed force in south-eastern Ukraine. We were unable to do so. The so-called anti-terrorist operation was launched, claiming civilian victims in its very first week. We have called again and again for an end to the violence and for the initiation of a full-fledged national dialogue that would avert further civilian casualties in Ukraine. Such an appeal was made to the authorities in Kyiv as recently as today by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Unfortunately, those calls have gone unheeded to date.

In conclusion, I recall that the topic of today's meeting is the protection of civilians. Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian military officer, is not a civilian. However,

the Russian journalists were definitely civilians, and she is accused of helping to kill them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Ukraine has asked to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Tsymbaliuk (Ukraine): I apologise for taking the floor again. I will try to be very brief.

First of all, I should like my Russian colleague to read very closely the latest reports of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on what is going on in Ukraine. I also wish to reiterate once again that Nadiya Savchenko was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, so her case is totally applicable to the theme we are discussing today.

At the same time, I would like once again to ask the Russian representative, if possible, to avoid misleading the Security Council on the current situation in Ukraine and to stop using this forum as a tool of simple propaganda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Chile to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives and their respective staffs, and to the secretariat of the Council for all the support they have given to us. Indeed, it has been a busy month, and one in which we rallied t[o] consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone and without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all relevant conference service officers.

As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of China good luck in the month of February.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7375

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7375th meeting
Wednesday, 4 February 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Liu Jieyi	(China)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	France	Mr. Bertoux
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Ms. Ramoškaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2015/51)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): As this is the first meeting of the Council for the month of February 2015, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Mr. Cristián Barros Melet, Permanent Representative of Chile, for his service as President of the Council for the month of January 2015. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Barros Melet and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2015/51)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nicholas Kay, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Maman Sidikou, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Ambassador Sidikou, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Mogadishu.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/51, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on Somalia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kay.

Mr. Kay: First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank you for taking the initiative to circulate many written questions in advance of today's briefing. I hope my briefing in the open meeting will cover a lot of those questions; others will be answered in the closed meeting. I also thank you for this opportunity to brief the Council on Somalia. I am particularly pleased to be doing so with my friend and colleague, Ambassador Sidikou. The partnership in Somalia between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations is unique, strong and essential for success.

I would like to use this briefing, if I may, to take a hard look at the challenges ahead this year. When I look ahead to 2015, I am both excited and worried. I am excited because this year will be decisive in whether and how Somalia can become a unified, peaceful and federal State. I am worried, because the challenges and risks are significant — delays and setbacks will have an even greater impact this year than last.

The year 2015 should be the year of federalism and delivery. The Federal Government's Vision 2016 remains the plan. But timelines have shortened significantly, largely as a result of repeated political crises. First, we need to accelerate the momentum established in 2014 in the federalism process, particularly building the capacity of existing interim regional administrations and establishing new ones where they do not exist. Within the next few months we need to see all the interim regional administrations in place. I welcome the intention to establish without delay an interregional consultative forum in Somalia.

Secondly, with a constitutional referendum expected in early 2016, the bulk of the constitutional review, including important discussions on power and resource sharing, will need to be completed this year.

Thirdly, key decisions and preparations for the 2016 referendum and elections must be made. The long-delayed National Independent Electoral Commission and the Boundaries and Federation Commission need to be established and operationalized urgently. We must continue to support and build the Federal Government's leadership and capacity, but inclusive political processes will be the key. Somalia's regions must play a full part in State-building and peacebuilding processes, and minority and marginalized groups need to be included in them. Women's participation and leadership at the

local and national level must be promoted. I note with concern that words and good intentions have not so far translated into action when it comes to selecting women for senior roles. Traditional elders and political leaders have a responsibility to make sure this happens.

Political infighting of the kind we saw last year could derail the whole project. The most recent crisis has delayed all key Government business for over three months and left Parliament divided and distracted. I welcome the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, but I am disappointed that it has not yet been possible to reach agreement with Parliament on a new Cabinet.

Once a Cabinet has been approved, future crises need to be avoided. To do this, Federal leaders and institutions, including Parliament, have a responsibility to improve their working practices, transparency and engagement with each other. Those with the greatest power and influence have the greatest responsibility to find workable compromises. They will be held accountable by Somalis and international partners for further instability and delay.

The importance of the political process this year will raise the stakes in Somali politics. I worry that tensions will rise as the 2016 elections get closer. Somalia's people and nascent institutions will be breaking historic new ground this year, as the country moves down the road to federalism and democracy. It is up to the country's political leaders to guide this process responsibly, build confidence among all groups and put aside narrow interests. A spirit of compromise is the hallmark of strength not weakness.

The sacrifice, courage and dedication of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army have had a decisive impact on security in Somalia. The United Nations Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) has played an exceptionally effective part in this success in 2014 and deserves recognition, as does the European Union (EU) for its role in meeting much of the costs of AMISOM and its deployment of the EU Training Mission to Mogadishu.

The campaign against Al-Shabaab will continue to advance in 2015. AMISOM and the Somali National Army will continue to counter Al-Shabaab's asymmetric approach. They need the right capability to defeat this threat. Combating terrorism also requires a more coherent regional approach, both within Somalia and in the Horn of Africa more broadly, to undermine Al-Shabaab's cross-border capability, finances and intent. Security for Somali civilians must improve. Al-Shabaab is not the only threat they face. Between the United Nations, AMISOM and federal and regional authorities we need to recognize and respond to the continuing potential for local inter-clan disputes to lead to conflict.

I am grateful for the Council's attention to the need to secure main supply routes to liberated areas. A great deal depends on it. Secure access will improve and enable military operations, allow independent and impartial needs-based humanitarian supplies to be delivered and, crucially, allow resumption of normal commercial activity.

Stabilization has to work this year. We need creative ways to accelerate delivery that strengthens the legitimacy of local administrations. Collectively we shall need to accept and manage the risk involved in such programmes. I look forward to greater implementation of the Federal Government's stabilization strategy, particularly local reconciliation and peacebuilding activities. To do this, we need more secure movement within liberated areas.

Promoting the rule of law is an important part of the peace dividend in newly recovered areas and a key part of State-building more broadly. This year we need to help extend basic access to justice sector institutions — police, justice and corrections — to the regions.

In 2015, we also need to set the foundations for a sustainable Somali defence sector. Implementing commitments made in September at the London Security Event will be key. Coherent support to 10,900 Somali National Army personnel in joint operations with AMISOM, the development of a plan for the defence sector, coherent national security architecture and militia integration into national security forces are the challenges. All this must be politically realistic — guided by and with the grain of the federalism process. It must also be financially sustainable.

Somalia remains one of the most dangerous places in which the Council has mandated operations. I pay tribute to the work and sacrifices of AMISOM and Somali troops over the last year. We were all saddened by the loss of life in the 25 December attack inside the Mogadishu International Airport area. I thank the Council members for their heartfelt statements of support and solidarity.

I am also most grateful for the professional work of the United Nations Guard Unit, provided by Uganda. In 2014, it allowed us to expand our presence in Mogadishu. Without it, we could not achieve the mandates the Council set for UNSOM and the United Nations Support Office for AMISOM. But, as we have expanded, the Guard Unit has been stretched to the limits of its capacity. In 2015, the demands on the United Nations will only increase. We shall need to expand our presence in the regions to support stabilization and Vision 2016. That will require a further expansion of the Guard Unit. I hope the upcoming joint African Union-United Nations benchmarking review can address this issue, among other things.

The United Nations, the African Union (AU), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the European Union and other international partners are working ever more closely together to ensure coherent support to make progress in Somalia. IGAD will continue to play a critical role in political processes, particularly at the regional level.

Delivering progress this year will require even closer collaboration and accountability between the Federal Government and international partners. The Copenhagen High-level Partnership Forum, held in November 2014, reaffirmed that the Somali Compact remained the right framework for that purpose. Partnership and mutual accountability need to be translated into concrete actions and must be extended to all areas, including aid flows, human rights and public financial management.

Somalis need to see the coordination and financing mechanisms established in 2014 deliver in 2015. Jointly agreed sectoral flagship programmes must be funded and implemented. I appeal to Member States and other partners to contribute to the United Nations Multi-partner Trust Fund.

Somalis also need to see an improvement in human rights and the protection of women and children this year. I welcome Somalia's recent ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We must also build the key institutions, particularly the national Human Rights Commission. Promoting and protecting human rights must underpin and become a core part of what existing federal and sub-federal institutions deliver.

Meanwhile, we must not be complacent about the humanitarian situation. In 2014, thanks to early warning and early action, we were able to prevent a deterioration of one of the most dire and enduring humanitarian crises in the world. But Somalia is still teetering on the edge. In 2015, we must see concerted action by the Federal Government and international partners to pull it back from the brink. That means both an ongoing life-saving emergency response and implementing longer-term, durable solutions.

The year 2014 saw important progress in key areas: the campaign against Al-Shabaab, the State-formation process and the establishment of some key institutions. That progress was the result of partnership among Somalis and between Somalis and the international community. I am heartened that international partners remain united and committed to peace, security and development in Somalia.

Over the past four months, Somalia's increasingly secure return to the community of nations has been marked by an unprecedented series of high-level visits, including by the Secretary-General, along with the Presidents of the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank; the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; the Secretary-General and representative of the League of Arab States; and, most recently, the Turkish President. The IGAD Council of Ministers meeting in Mogadishu on 10 January 2015, which was the first since 1985, was a major sign of commitment and confidence. I welcome the recommendation to hold an IGAD summit in Mogadishu in 2015. It is clear that peace and security in Somalia matters to the region, Africa and the world.

Despite all the bumps in the road, I still get a palpable sense from Somalis I meet across the country that progress is both urgent and possible. We now have more work to do this year than last. The Somali Compact and Vision 2016 remain the right frameworks. The High-level Partnership Forum meeting planned for May in Mogadishu will be a critical opportunity to adjust our plans, if necessary, to meet our targets by September 2016.

For Somalis to have lasting peace, they need to build a sustainable and inclusive State. Politics this year must be more inclusive than it was last year, at both the national and regional levels. The main responsibility lies with Somali political leaders in and outside Government, in the regions and in Mogadishu. I pay tribute to their hard work and daily courage. The United Nations and other international partners stand firm in our own commitment. I remain inspired by the

dedication and bravery of the United Nations family in Somalia, and I thank the Council for its unflinching support.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Kay for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Sidikou.

Mr. Sidikou: First, let me apologize, Mr. President, for speaking to the Security Council by video-teleconference. I would have preferred to attend this important Security Council meeting in person, but, as my colleague and good friend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Kay has just stated, there is a critical political activity in progress, namely the constitution of a Cabinet of Ministers, which entails real-time diplomatic and political facilitation on our part. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kay and I therefore thought it prudent that, in the spirit of our growing partnership and collaboration, there was the need for one of us to remain in Mogadishu to support our Somali brothers and sisters as they seek to have the list of Cabinet Ministers-designates endorsed by the Federal Parliament.

As the Council is well aware, in 2014, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army launched two successful offensives, Operation Eagle and Operation Indian Ocean, resulting in the recovery of 16 towns from Al-Shabaab. Beyond recovering those towns and liberating the population from Al-Shabaab's tyranny, our joint AMISOM and Somali National Army military campaigns have also opened up space for political activities outside Mogadishu. The regional States-formation process is progressing well, as Mr. Kay just mentioned. Dialogue and local reconciliation efforts are under way in many of those recovered areas despite some intermittent violent inter-clan conflict. The need, therefore, to support the Somali political and traditional leadership at both the federal and regional levels as the political process enters an even more sensitive stage, which includes the constitution-making process and the elections, cannot be overemphasized.

While we anticipate that the conventional phase of military operations against Al-Shabaab will be largely completed by the end of this year, we cannot claim that Al-Shabaab will thus have been defeated. As predicted, Al-Shabaab has and will continue to resort to asymmetric attacks. They will continue to seek to disrupt our main supply routes and step up attacks in the subregion. The Al-Shabaab of today is not the Al-Shabaab of yesterday. We must therefore respond to this new reality accordingly. We simply cannot continue to do business as usual. Yes, we have achieved a lot, but we can do better and achieve even more.

It is in that regard that, early this year, AMISOM and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia held a retreat in Kampala with the Federal Government of Somalia and our partners to reconsider how we are doing business. At the end of the retreat, we prioritized the following actions in addition to continued efforts to degrade the capabilities of Al-Shabaab: first, the urgent need to support the rebuilding of the Somali National Army through the organization and integration of local forces while taking into account their sustainability; secondly, the need to enhance support for effective defence and security services in Somalia and to focus on community-centred approaches to safety and security, including community policing; thirdly, the need to focus on ensuring sustained access to the recovered areas by securing the main supply routes as a key priority; and, fourthly, the need to ensure that all our operations are fully compliant with applicable and relevant international human rights and humanitarian law standards, in line with the Secretary-General's human rights due diligence policy. We have also realized that we need to reconfigure the Mission and resource it appropriately to be able to achieve these priorities.

Using our experience so far in the recovered areas, we have been able to define the critically required resources, including engineering, medical and civilian-military cooperation capabilities. With these capabilities, our military units will carry out basic social service support to local government authorities that will both facilitate the restoration of governance and also win the population. I believe also that our policing efforts have to now involve more community policing. This is critical as we seek to support the Government in realizing the Vision 2016 agenda and the peacebuilding and State-building goals outlined in the New Deal Compact.

In this phase, there is an extremely urgent need for the accelerated development of the Somali security forces to continue enabling stabilization efforts and to avoid reversals of the gains that have been made to date. The integration of militia and the standing up of the Somali National Army requires the concerted efforts of all partners rallying behind a Somali-led process. Let

me seize this opportunity to thank the Security Council for the unprecedented support provided to the Somali National Army. The provision of non-lethal support, as authorized by the Security Council, has contributed significantly to enhancing the operational effectiveness of the Somali National Army.

In the eyes of ordinary Somalis, liberation from Al-Shabaab will only translate into peace if and when they begin to see its dividends. The Government, with the support of the international community, has to redouble its efforts to provide basic services to the areas under its control. We need to provide food, sanitation and clean drinking water. We need to rehabilitate medical facilities and educational institutions. We need to generate employment for the Somali youth in order to wean them away from the conflict and divert their energies towards more productive activities.

Clearly, our political or military approaches can fully succeed only if they are underpinned by a reconstruction and development plan to support them. The Somali business community and diaspora are vibrant, contributing at least $1 billion dollars to Somalia in remittances. Their involvement and support is critical as Somalia moves into a post-war economy. That is why we are supporting the Government to engage the Somali diaspora to help generate more economic activities in Somalia and to contribute to early recovery activities.

Please allow me to thank all stakeholders and partners of Somalia, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union, the League of Arab States and individual Member States for their continuing support to the Federal Government of Somalia and to the African Union. I wish to encourage all of us to continue in this partnership to achieve peace, stability, recovery and development in Somalia. As we continue to work more closely, we will become more effective on the ground. This is what ultimately will also enhance the integrity of the international community as an honest broker in the peace process for Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ambassador Sidikou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Kullane (Somalia): I thank the Council for the opportunity to address it today on behalf of the Federal Government of Somalia.

I acknowledge the statements provided to the Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Nicholas Kay and Ambassador Sidikou of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Federal Government remains appreciative of the support for political progress and stability provided by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, as well as the support provided by AMISOM, which is a backbone for Somalia at the moment.

There can be no escaping the fact that Somalia has had an eventful few months across the spectrum in terms of politics, security and development. Commentary on Somalia has focused on political instability and disunity for the past few months. We are hopeful that the political situation is fast approaching resolution. The new Council of Ministers was announced by Prime Minister Sharmake on 27 January. It will be presented to Parliament for a vote on Monday, 9 February.

While there can be no denying that the political instability has tested the patience of all domestically and internationally, it would be wrong to presume that this has completely stifled all progress. It has made progress more difficult, but not impossible. In fact, while political stability and unity is, of course, optimal, it is the lack of capacity of the federal institutions that is the more pressing issue faced by Somalia. Somalia is not alone in facing political instability, but other countries weather political storms because they have robust institutions in place that continue with the business of the Government, despite politicians. Somalia does not have this luxury. If our political situation is exposed, then our institutions are also exposed. The President and Prime Minister have called attention to this and encouraged the new Council of Ministers to exercise restraint in replacing civil servants within ministries, instead advocating that senior civil servants, if they have been performing, remain in their positions so that the Government work continues apace.

Despite the situation, progress has been made. The legal framework required for the implementation of Vision 2016 advanced; the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission law was passed by the Council of Ministers and endorsed by the Parliament; and the Executive Commission was appointed by the Speaker. The Parliament passed the Boundaries and Federation Commission law and the decree for its establishment was signed by the President on 31 December 2014. It is the intent that several other

outstanding pieces of legislation, including the National Independent Electoral Commission law, the Human Rights Commission and the Political Parties Law, will be approved by the Parliament in this sitting.

The process of federation continues with improved cooperation with Puntland and the Interim Juba Administration and the agreements reached for the establishment of the south-west and central interim regional administrations. Technical committees are in the early stages of establishment and discussions are ongoing for the establishment of an interim regional administration covering the remaining southern and central regions of Somalia.

District-level administrations are being established. Following the Local Governance law, interim and permanent administrations are being established in several districts and caretaker administrations have been put in place in all recovered districts. Gains made are fragile and will need consolidation to become sustainable. The formalization of the Government system must now extend outward to regional-level governments. This pr cess must be overseen by the centre, but be responsive to local demand and mindful of local contexts. Time must be allowed for change to take root and due process to be followed by all agents of change.

Accompanying these political and governance processes, reconciliation activities are taking place, ranging from social to civic dialogues and political reconciliation activities at the district and national levels. Reconciliation conferences have been initiated in Kismaayo and Baidoa, and there is a commitment to holding one such conference in each newly formed interim regional administration. The political progress in reaching out to the regions is commendable. Making progress on the Somali Compact objectives hinges on the resolution of political challenges, with ongoing close and regular monitoring required. It was agreed at the High-level Partnership Forum in Copenhagen that the political progress would be reviewed within six months.

Somalia signed the Convention for the Rights of the Child in January, making the United States and South Sudan the only remaining countries in the world not to have signed. The Federal Government will now work on drafting and adopting child-friendly policies and systems, and implementing measures to target child survival, development, participation and protection, and provide regular reports on its progress to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Security remains critical for political, social and economic progress. Establishing capable, accountable and inclusive Somali security institutions remains vital. The integration of existing security forces into a cohesive structure is a priority that goes hand in hand with the progress on political inclusiveness. The integration of local armed groups into the Somali National Army and the federal and regional security structures is a critical part of the political benchmark and constitutes a cornerstone of a mutual accountability framework between the federal Government and the states. There has been progress on the Federal Government's road map on the integration of forces and an agreement to rapidly develop a concept note and detailed plan setting out integration principles.

The Somali National Army, in joint operations with the African Union Mission in Somalia, has successfully accomplished two joint offensive operations, recovering 80 per cent of southern and central regions of Somalia from Al-Shabaab. The Government's policy of offering amnesty for defections from Al-Shabaab extremist groups was highly effective, with a steady stream of foot soldiers defecting. Several high-value defections were also recorded — the senior Al-Shabaab commander, Sheikh Mohamed Said Mohamed, "Atom"; Zakariya Ismail Ahmed Hersi; and the commander Hussein Dhubi. We acknowledge the cooperation of the Security Council in delisting those individuals from the United Nations Sanctions List.

Progress has been made in meeting the requirements of the resolution 2142 (2014). Weapons and ammunition management has progressed with the establishment of a defined institutional framework for oversight. The Somali Federal Government also signed a maritime interdiction letter in compliance with the Security Council's most recent resolution on the matter.

We acknowledge the constituting of the new United Nations Monitoring Group and we look forward to establishing a respectful, robust professional working relationship with it. To that end, we remind the Council of our joint commitment to convening twice-yearly meetings to discuss the progress made in Somalia within the framework of the Committee's guidelines for the conduct of its work, with the goal of improving the effectiveness of our Government's engagement with the Monitoring Group, the Security Council and the

Sanctions Committee. The last such meeting was held in August 2014 in Mogadishu. We therefore urge the Council to consider convening a meeting in Mogadishu soon.

The President has been clear that 2015 must be the year for delivery. Somalia is at a critical juncture in its efforts to achieve security and stability. We are winning the war but must win the peace. As we look towards to the next two years, we must urgently deliver on priority legislation, establish commissions and ensure the public consultations that will enable us to achieve the three intertwined strands of the Vision 2016.

The Federal Government of Somalia appreciates the Council's consideration of the matters raised today. I am available for any questions the Council may have.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.